THE CASE OF BELGIUM

IN THE PRESENT WAR

AN ACCOUNT OF THE
VIOLATION OF THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM
AND OF THE LAWS OF WAR ON BELGIAN
TERRITORY

PUBLISHED
FOR THE BELGIAN DELEGATES TO THE UNITED STATES
BY
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1914

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ADDRESS

His Majesty, the King of the Belgians, has appointed a Special Envoy, for the purpose of acquainting the President of the United States of America with the deplorable state of affairs prevailing in Belgium, whose neutrality has been unjustly violated and who, since the beginning of hostilities, has been the theater of the worst outrages on the part of the invading German army, in defiance of rules solemnized by International Treaties, and customs consecrated by public right and the Law of Nations.

Mr. Henry Carton de Wiart, Minister of Justice, has been chosen for this mission. He is accompanied by Messrs. de Sadeleer, Hymans, and Vandervelde, Ministers of State. Count Louis de Lichtervelde is attached to the Mission as secretary.

The Mission was received by the President of the United States in Washington, on September 16th, 1914.

Mr. Henry Carton de Wiart, in the name of the Mission, made the following address:

"*Excellency:*

"*His Majesty, the King of the Belgians, has charged us with a special mission to the President of the United States.*

"*Let me say to you how much we feel ourselves honored to have been called upon to express the sentiments of our King and of our whole nation to the illustrious*

statesman whom the American people have called to the highest dignity of the commonwealth.

"As far as I am concerned, I have already been able, during a previous trip, to fully appreciate the noble virtues of the American Nation, and I am happy to take this opportunity to express all the admiration with which they inspire me.

"Ever since her independence was first established, Belgium has been declared neutral in perpetuity. This neutrality, guaranteed by the Powers, has recently been violated by one of them. Had we consented to abandon our neutrality for the benefit of one of the belligerents, we would have betrayed our obligations toward the others. And it was the sense of our international obligations as well as that of our dignity and honor that has driven us to resistance.

"The consequences suffered by the Belgian Nation were not confined purely to the harm occasioned by the forced march of an invading army. This army not only seized a great portion of our territory, but it committed incredible acts of violence, the nature of which is contrary to the law of Nations.

"Peaceful inhabitants were massacred, defenseless women and children were outraged, open and undefended towns were destroyed; historical and religious monuments were reduced to dust, and the famous library of the University of Louvain was given to the flames.

"Our Government has appointed a judicial Commission to make an official investigation, so as to thoroughly and impartially examine the facts and to determine the responsibility thereof, and I will have the honor, Excellency, to hand over to you the Proceedings of the inquiry.

"In this frightful holocaust which is sweeping all over Europe, the United States has adopted a neutral attitude.

"And it is for this reason that your country, standing apart from either one of the belligerents, is in the best position to judge, without bias or partiality, the conditions under which the war is being waged.

"It is at the request, even at the initiative of the United States, that all civilized nations have formulated and adopted at The Hague a law regulating the laws and usage of war.

"We refuse to believe that war has abolished the family of Civilized Powers, or the regulations to which they have freely consented.

"The American people has always displayed its respect for Justice, its search for progress and an instinctive attachment for the laws of humanity. Therefore, it has won a moral influence which is recognized by the entire world. It is for this reason that Belgium, bound as she is to you by ties of commerce and increasing friendship, turns to the American people at this time to let it know the real truth of the present situation. Resolved to continue unflinching defence of its sovereignty and independence, it deems it a duty to bring to the attention of the civilized world the innumerable grave breaches of rights of mankind, of which she has been a victim.

"At the very moment we were leaving Belgium, the King recalled to us his trip to the United States and the vivid and strong impression your powerful and virile civilization left upon his mind.

"Our faith in your fairness, our confidence in your justice, in your spirit of generosity and sympathy, all these have dictated our present mission."

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PREFACE

BELGIUM has seen her territory invaded by one of the Powers guaranteeing her independence and neutrality. Those who have thus violated the law of nations did not content themselves with opening a passage by force of arms: they have committed, have had others commit, or allowed to be committed, a series of the most flagrant infractions of the rules of warfare as set down by The Hague Convention of 1907.

Deeds of this nature occurred from the very beginning of hostilities.

Immediately, the Belgian Minister of Justice, Mr. Carton de Wiart, appointed a Commission of Inquiry, in order to look into the violations of the rules of the law of nations committed by the invaders.

The members of this Commission were chosen from the flower of magistracy, as well as from the world of scholars. Their independence, their impartiality, their high standing and the reputation they enjoy, in Belgium as well as abroad, allow no shadow of doubt to fall upon the conclusions reached by the Commission.

A Notice published in the "Moniteur" (the official Belgian newspaper) under date of August 8th, sets forth the object of the Commission as follows:

"The invaders are committing numerous violations against the law of nations and in defiance of elementary humanitarian rules.

"They cannot remain without protest; they must be submitted to the reprobation of the civilized world. A committee is being formed to investigate. Its object is to gather and to examine with the utmost care and impartiality all the facts brought to its notice.

"The committee is composed of Messrs. Cattier, Professor at the Brussels University; Nys, Counselor at the Brussels Court of Appeal; Verhaegen, Counselor at the Brussels Court of Appeal; Wodon, Professor at the Brussels University. Secretary: Mr. Gillard, Director of the Department of Justice.

"Civil and military authorities, and civilians are requested to call to the committee's attention any violation against the law of nations, and to supply it with full information in order to enable it to ascertain the facts.

"The committee will meet at 61, rue Ducale, Brussels."

From the very day of its appointment, the committee was apprised of numerous facts. It began immediately its investigation and received, under oath, endless testimony; its first conclusions are recorded in the pages hereafter appended.

After August 18th, when the seat of Government was transferred to Antwerp, and communication with Brussels became impossible, the Government received no further reports from its commission. However, a number of new facts were brought to its attention, and the Minister of Justice decided to appoint a sub-committee of the Commission of Inquiry, which will maintain its headquarters at Antwerp, until communication with Brussels is resumed.

The Antwerp sub-committee is composed of the following:

Chairman, Mr. Cooreman, Minister of State; Members, Count Goblet d'Alviella, Minister of State, Vice-President of the Senate; Messrs. Ryckmans, Senator; Strauss, Alderman of the City of Antwerp; Van Cutsem, Honorary President of the Law Court of Antwerp.

Secretaries: Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck, Chief Secretary of the Belgian Minister of Justice; Mr. Orts, Counselor of Legation.

We shall find further on, page 35, the first reports of the Antwerp section of the Commission. We have printed in the following pages: (1) a note concerning Belgium's neutrality; (2) a note concerning the confiscation of bank funds and other property belonging to private individuals; (3) a note regarding the aerial bombardment of Antwerp, and the bombardment of Malines and of Heyst-op-den Berg; (4) a note on the use of explosive bullets. Further on we publish the minutes of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry.

These documents prove that the Germans, in a war against a nation against which they have no grievance of any kind, have resorted to proceedings which are not alone inadmissible from the humanitarian standpoint, but are directly prohibited by The Hague Rules regarding the laws of warfare.

In order to be convinced, it will be sufficient to compare the findings of the Commission of Inquiry with the principal articles of these rules, and particularly with articles 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 46.

"*Art. 22 and 23:* Belligerents have no unlimited right as to the choice of means to injure the enemy.

"Aside from prohibitions set down by special conventions, the following is particularly forbidden:

"(a) . . . . . .

"(b) To fire upon or to wound by treachery individuals belonging to the nation, or to the army, of the enemy.

"(c) To fire upon, or wound an enemy who, having put down his arms or being without means to defend himself, has surrendered at discretion.

"(d) To use arms, projectiles or other material liable to cause useless suffering.

"(e) . . . . . .

"(f) To make use unduly of the flag of truce, of the national flag and military insignia and uniform of the enemy. . . .

"(g) To destroy or to seize the enemy's property except in case where the destruction or seizure are an imperative necessity of war.

"(h) . . . . . .

"A belligerent is not permitted to force countrymen of the enemy's land to participate in war-like operations directed against their country. . . ."

Among the numerous accusations which were brought to the attention of the Commission by the public, only those facts have been retained which have been verified beyond doubt by testimony worthy of credence. These facts represent only a very small part of those which seem to have been really committed. Nevertheless, they remain so numerous as to prove that the above mentioned prescriptions were subjected to the most flagrant infractions. As a matter of fact, it will be seen further on that, in a number of cases, detachments of German troops flew the white flag, or the flag of the Red Cross, in order to approach the unsuspecting troops; they have killed the wounded, and at times have tortured them. They have used explosive bullets; they have destroyed and set fire

to numerous villages. Frequently, they forced the inhabitants to serve as guides, or to make trenches for the enemy's army. Others were carried off toward Germany, and it is said that they were made to harvest the crops, just as in the old times of slavery.

"*Art. 25:* It is prohibited to attack or bombard, by any means whatsoever, cities, villages, habitations or buildings which are undefended.

"*Art. 26:* The commander of the attacking troops, before undertaking to bombard, except in cases of sudden attack, must do all in his power to advise the authorities of the intended bombardment.

"*Art. 27:* During the siege, and in bombardment, every possible measure must be taken to spare, wherever possible, buildings consecrated to worship, to art, to science, and to charity, historical monuments, hospitals and places of retreat for the sick and wounded, provided that these buildings be not at the same time used for military purposes."

It will be seen that the Germans, from the very beginning, in order to terrorize the civil population, have in no wise observed these prohibitions. They have bombarded Malines and Heyst-op-den-Berg, which were undefended. Without any previous intimation, their dirigibles have thrown bombs upon Louvain, an open town, upon Namur, and Antwerp, which places, at that time, were neither invested nor besieged. They have fired upon ambulances, and (without any military necessity) have directed their fire (at Malines, for instance) against houses of worship and historical monuments.

"*Art. 46:* The honor and the rights of the family, the life of individuals and private property, as well as re-

ligious convictions and the exercise of worship, must be respected. Private property cannot be confiscated."

We can only refer here to the conclusions reached by the Commission of Inquiry. The list would be too long should we try to enumerate the numerous attacks directed against the life of individuals and private property. Some of these facts are already known. Suffice it to recall the burning of Visé, the sacking and massacres at Aerschot, and, especially, the destruction of the old University City of Louvain, which the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Asquith, declared to be the greatest crime which has dishonored a belligerent nation since the Thirty-Years War!

In order to justify or, at least, to excuse such acts, the German authorities claim that they constituted reprisals, which were caused by the hostile attitude of the civil population.

At Aerschot, for instance, the prominent inhabitants were shot; more than a hundred persons were massacred; a number of houses were burnt: it was said that this was to avenge the death of a German officer who had been killed by the son of the burgomaster.

At Louvain they set fire to the four corners of the city. The Library of the University, the Church of St. Pierre, with its paintings and other art treasures, have been reduced to ashes: it was said that this was done to set an example, to chastise the inhabitants for having fired upon German troops.

It will be seen in the report of the Commission of Inquiry that these allegations are contradicted by numerous and concurring witnesses.

The witnesses one and all concur in saying that the son of the burgomaster of Aerschot, a lad of fifteen

years, gentle and quiet, was absolutely incapable of committing the murder which was imputed to him.

On the other hand, in Louvain, if German soldiers were killed in the course of a nocturnal panic, everything leads to the belief that they were shot, on entering the city, by their own fellow-soldiers who took them for enemies. However that may be, the statement that civilians had fired shots is a pure allegation, to confirm which there was not a shade of proof forthcoming. As a matter of fact, it is denied by numerous depositions. It is also contradicted by the fact that, long before the entrance of German troops into the city, civilians had been disarmed.

Moreover, it must be remembered in a general way that, from the very beginning of the war, the Belgian Government had had warnings posted in every locality of the Kingdom, instructing the civil population not to participate in any way in military operations. More than that, anxious to avoid any chance for bloody reprisals, it had ordered the deposit of all arms which might be found upon civilians.

But, admitting for a moment, for the sake of argument, that, in spite of all these precautions, acts of violence were committed; that civilians fired upon German troops, or spontaneously defended their threatened homes. As long as the territory is not effectively invested and occupied by the enemy, article 2 of The Hague convention authorizes such acts, if the arms be carried openly and the rules of warfare be respected.

However, had it been otherwise, there was no excuse for holding the whole population collectively responsible for the acts of a small number of individuals.

If the son of the burgomaster at Aerschot had been

convicted of the killing of the German officer; if some inhabitants of Louvain had really fired upon German troops, the Germans might have had the authors of such acts punished under the law of the conqueror; instead, by taking hostages, by executing innocent men, by disseminating everywhere terror, fire and death, by substituting —as savages do—joint responsibility for individual responsibility, they have dishonored warfare and forever destroyed the guaranties which the law of nations accords to peaceful and non-combatant civilians.

If such actions were not held up to universal reproof, then nothing would remain of this International Law, which, for the last half century, civilized peoples have striven for and codified.

Bluntschli, the Jurist, magnificently defined this law in the following terms:

"The present International Law denies entirely the right to dispose arbitrarily of the fate of individuals, and does not admit of ill-treatment or violence against them. Personal security, honor and liberty are private rights which the laws of war do not permit to be attacked. The enemy may take such steps only as are necessary for military operations or necessary for the safety of the State."

It falls to the honor of the United States to have been the first nation in history to inscribe its principles in a code, "Instructions for the Army During the Campaign." These principles have, since that time, been accepted by all the Powers at present engaged in the European war. Germany has subscribed to them; she has adopted the rules of The Hague. She has given before the associated nations of the world the solemn promise not to infringe these rules. She is responsible before international opinion for this promise.

To that opinion this appeal is addressed. Supported by her rights, ready to endure everything to maintain them, Belgium does not ask for pity: she asks for justice. She asks it for herself and asks it especially for the honor of civilization and of humanity.

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I

THE VIOLATION OF THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM AND OF BELGIAN TERRITORY

THE VIOLATION OF THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM AND OF BELGIAN TERRITORY

THE peculiarity about Belgian neutrality is that it has been imposed upon her by the Powers as the one condition upon which they recognized her national existence.

No sooner had the Belgians proclaimed their independence, than the Five Powers, England, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia, met in conference in London. There they signed, on June 26th, 1831, the document known as "The Treaty of 18 Articles."

The text of articles 9 and 10 of the said treaty is as follows:

"*Art. 9:* Belgium, within the limits traced in conformity with the principles laid down in the present preliminaries, shall form a perpetually neutral State. The Five Powers, without wishing to intervene in the internal affairs of Belgium, guarantee her that perpetual neutrality as well as the integrity and inviolability of her territory in the limits mentioned in the present article."

"*Art. 10:* By just reciprocity Belgium shall be held to observe this same neutrality toward all the other States and to make no attack on their internal or external tranquillity whilst always preserving the right to defend herself against any foreign aggression."

This agreement was followed up on January 23rd, 1839, by a definitive treaty, accepted by Belgium and by

the Netherlands, which treaty regulates Belgium's neutrality as follows:

"*Art. 7:* Belgium, within the limits defined in articles 1, 2 and 4, shall form an independent and perpetually neutral State. She is obligated to preserve this neutrality against all the other States."

All the articles of this treaty were placed under the guarantee of the Powers.

Belgium has always loyally and strictly fulfilled her duties inherent to this neutrality; on the other hand, the Powers, guarantors of her neutrality, had remained faithful to their word.

Thus, in 1870, at the time when the Franco-Prussian War broke out, the two belligerent Powers, when invited by Great Britain to manifest their intentions with regard to Belgium's neutrality, both of them replied that they intended to respect it fully. In fact, neither Belgium's neutrality nor her territorial integrity were compromised in 1870.

Ever since that time, no occasion has been omitted by the Powers, guarantors of her neutrality, and especially by Germany, to express to Belgium their friendly feeling, as well as their admiration for the moral and material progress achieved by the young Kingdom, whose existence they had, in 1831, recognized and guaranteed. Thus, in 1910, His Majesty, William II, paid an official visit to His Majesty, the King of the Belgians in Brussels. At that time he expressed himself in most laudatory terms about the Belgian Nation and its institutions. He thanked Belgium for the reception tendered to thousands of German subjects who had in the Kingdom found hospitality and wealth. During the summer of 1913, the German Emperor, taking advantage of the "Joyeuse En-

trée" of the King and Queen, and the Royal children into Liège, availed himself of the occasion to send to them as special envoy General von Emmich, who brought to the Royal Family the solemn assurance of the German Emperor's cordial friendship.

On Sunday, August 2nd, 1914, at 7 o'clock in the evening, without the least warning of such an incredible decision, the German Minister in Brussels handed to the Belgian Government the following ultimatum, requesting a reply within 12 hours:

"Brussels, August 2nd, 1914.

"The German Government has received positive information according to which French forces intend to march upon the Meuse by way of Givet and Namur. This information leaves no doubt as to France's intention to march upon Germany through Belgian territory. The Imperial German Government cannot help fearing that Belgium, in spite of her willingness to prevent this, may not be in a position to repulse, without assistance, a French movement of such proportions. This fact is sufficient evidence of a French attack directed against Germany.

"It is Germany's imperative duty of self-preservation to forestall this attack of the enemy.

"The German Government should greatly regret if Belgium should regard as an act of hostility directed against herself the fact that the steps taken by Germany's enemies oblige her, on her side, to violate Belgian territory.

"In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the German Government declares the following:

"1st: Germany does not contemplate any hostile act against Belgium. If Belgium—in the war which is imminent—will consent to adopt an attitude of friendly neu-

trality toward Germany, the German Government on the other hand promises that, when peace is concluded, it will protect the Kingdom and all its possessions to their fullest extent.

"2nd: Germany promises, on the condition set forth above, to evacuate Belgian territory as soon as peace is concluded.

"3rd: If Belgium preserves a friendly attitude, Germany declares herself ready, in concurrence with the authorities of the Belgian Government, to buy for ready cash everything necessary to its troops, and to indemnify Belgium for the damage caused in her territory.

"4th: Should Belgium behave in a hostile manner toward German troops, especially by placing difficulties in the line of their march, or by resisting with the forts of the Meuse, or by destroying highways, railroads and tunnels, or other works, Germany shall be obliged to consider Belgium as an enemy.

"In that case, Germany will make no promises to the Kingdom, but will leave to the decision of arms the regulation of the ultimate relations of the two States toward each other. The German Government is justified in hoping that this eventuality will not arise, and that the Belgian Government will take appropriate steps to prevent its arising. In that case the friendly relations of the two States will become closer and more lasting."

On receipt of this ultimatum, the Council of Ministers, sitting under the Presidency of the King, and completed by the Ministers of State, decided unanimously to reply to this extraordinary and outrageous ultimatum by the following note which was handed to the German Minister in Brussels on Monday, August 3rd, at 7 o'clock A. M.

"August 3rd, 1914.

"Under date of August 2nd, 1914, the German Government has announced that, according to positive in-

formation, the French intended to march upon the Meuse by way of Givet and Namur, and that Belgium, in spite of its willingness to prevent this, would not be in a position to repulse without assistance a forward march of French troops, that the German Government considered itself obliged to forestall this attack and to violate Belgian territory. Under these conditions Germany proposes to the King's Government to adopt toward her a friendly attitude and promises, at the time when peace is concluded, to protect the integrity of the Kingdom and its possessions to their fullest extent. The notification adds that if Belgium offers difficulties to the forward march of German troops, Germany shall be obliged to consider Belgium as an enemy and to leave to the decision of arms the regulation of the ultimate relations of the two States.

"This notification has profoundly and painfully astonished the King's Government.

"The intentions which she attributes to France are in contradiction to the formal declarations made to us under date of August 1st in the name of the Government of the Republic.

"Moreover, if, contrary to our expectation, the country's neutrality should be violated by France, Belgium would fulfill its international duties and her army would oppose a most vigorous resistance to the invader.

"The treaties of 1839, confirmed by the treaties of 1870, perpetuate Belgium's independence and neutrality under the guarantee of the Powers, and especially under the guarantee of the Government of his Majesty the King of Prussia.

"Belgium has always faithfully observed her international obligations; she has fulfilled her duties in a spirit of loyal impartiality; she has neglected no opportunity to maintain her neutrality and to cause it to be respected by others.

"The attack upon her independence with which Ger-

many menaces her is a flagrant violation of the law of Nations.

"No strategic interest can justify the violation of that right.

"The Belgian Government, by accepting the propositions mentioned, would sacrifice its national honor and betray at the same time its duty toward Europe.

"Conscious of the rôle which Belgium has played for more than 80 years in the civilized world, it refuses to believe that its independence can only be preserved at the price of a violation of its neutrality.

"If the Belgian Government be disappointed in its expectations, it is resolved to repulse by every means in its power any attack upon its rights."

The following morning the Belgian Parliament was hurriedly summoned. His Majesty the King opened the Session with the following speech, which was received with enthusiastic acclamations:

"Gentlemen:

"Never, since 1830, has a more serious hour struck for Belgium: the integrity of our territory is threatened!

"The very strength of our right, the sympathy which Belgium, proud of her free institutions and of her moral conquests, has uninterruptedly enjoyed at the hands of other nations, the necessity of her autonomous existence for the equilibrium of Europe, still make us hope that the threatening events will not take place.

"However, if our expectations be deceived, if we are obliged to resist the invaders of our soil and to defend our menaced homes, this duty, however hard, will find us armed and prepared for the greatest sacrifices.

"Already our gallant youth, in anticipation of every eventuality, is ready, firmly resolved, with the traditional tenacity and coolness of the Belgians, to defend the endangered country.

"In the name of the nation, I fraternally salute the

army. Everywhere, Flemings and Walloons, in the cities and in the country, one sole sentiment binds our hearts: Patriotism; one sole vision fills our spirits: our endangered independence; one sole duty imposes itself upon us: a stubborn resistance.

"Under these circumstances two virtues are indispensable: a cool courage, but a strong courage, and a close union of all the Belgian people.

"Both of these virtues have already been demonstrated brilliantly under the eyes of the Nation, filled with enthusiasm.

"The perfect mobilization of our army, the number of voluntary enlistments, the devotion of the civil population, the self-denial of families, have shown, beyond dispute, the consoling bravery which animates the whole Belgian people.

"The time for action has come.

"I have assembled you, Gentlemen, in order to allow the Legislative Chambers to unite with the people in the same spirit of sacrifice.

"You will therefore immediately take measures necessary for war as well as for preservation of public order, under the present circumstances.

"When I look upon this enthusiastic assembly, an assembly in which there is but one party, the side of the Fatherland, where every heart beats in unison, my mind goes back to the Congress of 1830, and I ask you, Gentlemen, are you firmly resolved to maintain the sacred patrimony of your forefathers?

"None in this country but will do his duty.

"The army, strong and disciplined as it is, is equal to its task. My Government and myself have the utmost confidence in its leaders and its soldiers.

"Closely allied with the population, and supported by it, the Government is conscious of its responsibilities and will assume them to the very end with the deliberate conviction that the efforts of each and every one, if united

in a spirit of most fervent patriotism, will safeguard the supreme welfare of the country.

"If the foreigner, trampling upon our neutrality, the duties of which we have always scrupulously observed, violates the territory, he will find every Belgian around his Sovereign, who will never betray his Constitutional Oath, and around the Government invested with the supreme confidence of the entire nation.

"I have faith in our destiny: a country which defends itself cannot but gain the respect of everyone: that country cannot perish.

"God will be with us in this just cause.

"Long live independent Belgium!"

At that very hour an immense German army, under the leadership of General von Emmich, penetrated into Belgium, and began a bloody war in which—irritated apparently by the gallant resistance which they encountered at the hands of a small country, a country faithful to its duties and true to its honor—the army committed innumerable horrors and atrocities.

On that same day, August 4th, 1914, Mr. von Bethmann-Hollwegg, Chancellor of the German Empire, speaking from the Tribune of the Reichstag, made the following admission: "Our troops have occupied Luxemburg, and are perhaps even now trampling upon Belgian soil. This act is contrary to the law of Nations."

The German Government, then, is conscious of its wrong-doing. As one of the guarantors of Belgium's neutrality, it wanted to force Belgium to relinquish its neutrality for Germany's benefit. Because Belgium would not consent to this perjury, and because Germany could not reproach her with anything else, Germany invaded and covered with blood and ruin a small, peaceful coun-

try, of hardworking and honest people, a country which it had promised to protect!

This attack upon her neutrality is the first violation for which Belgium asks judgment from the universal conscience.

The entire Belgo-German question to-day is dominated by the fact of this violation of the neutrality of Belgium.

Therefore, there is not a single shot fired by a German soldier in Belgium which is not manifestly and avowedly belying most sacred things: the keeping of a solemn pledge and the fulfillment of promises voluntarily given!

II

ATTACKS ON THE PROPERTY OF INDIVIDUALS AND THE CONFISCATION OF THE FUNDS OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

ATTACKS ON THE PROPERTY OF INDIVIDUALS AND THE CONFISCATION OF THE FUNDS OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

In the days of barbarism, the population of a territory occupied by the enemy was deprived of all judicial capacity. "At that time," as Ghering writes ironically, "the enemy was absolutely deprived of rights; everything he owned belonged to the gallant warrior who had wrenched it away from him. One had merely to lose it!"

In our days, the rules of warfare clearly establish the difference between the property of the Government of the territory occupied, and the property of individuals. While the present doctrine allows the conqueror to seize, in a general way, everything in the way of movable property belonging to the State, it obliges him on the other hand to respect the property of individuals, corporations, and public provincial administrations.

The Hague Convention, signed on October 18th, 1897, by all the civilized States, and among others by Germany, contains the following stipulations regarding laws and customs of warfare on land:

Art. 46: The honor and the rights of the family, the life of individuals and private property, as well as religious convictions and the exercise of worship, must be respected. Private property cannot be confiscated.

Art. 47: Pillaging is formally prohibited.

Art. 53: When occupying a territory, the army can

only seize cash as well as funds and securities belonging entirely to the State, also depots of arms, ways and means of transportation, warehouses and provisions, and, in a general way, all movable property belonging to the State, and liable to be used for warlike operations. . . .

Art. 56: Property of municipalities, property of establishments consecrated to worship, to charity and instruction, to art and science, even though belonging to the State, will be treated as private property. . . .

In defiance of these conventional rules, voluntarily and solemnly accepted by Germany, she has committed from the beginning of her invasion of Belgian soil, numerous attacks upon private property.

Aside from facts which have been collected by the Commission of Inquiry, the minutes of which will be found further on, the German army has unwarrantably seized the funds of the branches of the National Bank in the cities of Hasselt and Liège.

At Hasselt, on August 12th, 1914, Germans confiscated the funds of the branch of the National Bank, which amounted to 2,075,000 francs. At Liège, on entering the city, they forcibly seized the funds of a branch of the same bank, amounting to 4,000,000 francs. Moreover, upon finding at that branch bundles of bank-notes (5 franc denomination), representing an amount of 400,000 francs, and which were not yet signed, they forced a printer to sign those bank notes by means of a rubber stamp which they had also seized; and they afterwards put them into circulation.

It is indisputable that the National Bank, in spite of its title, is a private institution. Far from being an institution of the State, administered by officials, it is a shareholders' corporation, the capital being obtained

by subscription of private parties. Stockholders participate in its administration by representation. The right conferred upon the bank to issue notes, as well as its quality of a State Depository, explains and justifies the Government's intervention in the bank's organization. This intervention, however, does not in any way affect the bank's autonomy.

The private character of the Belgian National Bank is even more apparent than that of the French National Bank. Thus, in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, when the Prussians entered Rheims on September 4, 1870, they wanted to confiscate the funds of the branch of the National Bank of France. It being intimated to them by the directors of the said branch that the bank was a private institution and therefore entitled to safety under the law of nations, Crown Prince Frederick ordered that "funds which were found at the 'Banque Nationale de France' could not be seized or held as long as they were not used for the maintenance of the French army."
(Paul Schiemann, Rechstlage der öffentlichen Banken im Kriegsfalle. Greif-Wald, 1902, page 76.)

Thus, Germany herself, as long ago as 1870, acknowledged the illegality of procedures to which she is to-day freely resorting in Belgium—illegality which to-day is even more strictly defined by The Hague Convention which she signed in 1907.

Besides these unjustifiable confiscations must be mentioned those of public funds, seized by German troops in most cities and villages occupied by them. By confiscating the funds of the post offices, Germany has also confiscated the savings belonging to numerous working people affiliated with the "Caisse d'Epargne et de Retraite"; this

service being conducted by the Belgian Post Office authorities.

Not satisfied with these numerous confiscations, the German army has levied from every Belgian city of importance, huge quantities of provisions. To this she has also added war contributions. Thus, for instance, she has tried to levy upon the city of Brussels the sum of 50,000,000 francs, and upon the unfortunate Province of Brabant, so sorely tried by carnage, the sum of 450,000,000 francs! ! Whereas, according to article 52 of The Hague Convention, contributions and services can be levied upon the enemy "only to the extent of the needs of the invading army and in proportion to the resources of the country and of the population; and provided they will not put the population under obligation to participate in warlike operations against its own country."

III

BOMBARDMENT IN VIOLATION OF THE HAGUE RULES

BOMBARDMENT IN VIOLATION OF THE HAGUE RULES

BELGIUM, like the United States, has accepted and adopted as a regulation concerning the laws of warfare, the article of the Hague Convention of 1907, prohibiting "the throwing of projectiles and explosives from balloons, or by any other agency." Germany, on the contrary (as well as several other Powers), has accepted it with certain reservations. However, she has unconditionally subscribed to the following regulations:

"It is prohibited to attack or to bombard, by any means whatsoever, cities and villages, dwellings and buildings which are undefended.

"The commander of the attacking troops, before undertaking to bombard—except in cases of assault—must use every effort in his power to warn the authorities."

In spite of this, German aëroplanes and dirigibles, since the beginning of the war, have repeatedly bombarded localities which were undefended, or have done so without any previous warning, attacking fortified places which were neither besieged nor invested. This is true especially in the case of Louvain, Namur and Antwerp.

The present writer happened to be in Antwerp when, during the night of August 24th to 25th, a dirigible of the Zeppelin type appeared over the city and threw explosive bombs in the direction of the Royal Palace, the building occupied by the Government and other public buildings.

It is evident that the attack was specially directed against members of the Royal family and the Ministers. However, their projectiles, nine in number, fell into the street and upon private residences, which were partially demolished. Eight persons were instantly killed; others were more or less seriously hurt, and two of them did not survive their injuries.

We have personally witnessed the damage caused by these bombs:

(a) In the Rue Léopold, for instance, adjacent to the Stock Exchange, the two top floors of a house were entirely demolished by the explosion.

(b) In the Rue des Escrimeurs, near the hotel inhabited by the cabinet ministers, the residences of Lawyer Spee and Dr. Mertens were seriously damaged by two bombs. The roof of Dr. Mertens' house was ripped open and two unfortunate servants were killed in their beds.

(c) In the Place du Poids Public a bomb fell on the pavement. Fragments of it scattered with intense force all over the place. Not a house facing the square but was covered with holes. A policeman on guard was literally cut to pieces: all that was found of him was a leg covered with a few rags of his uniform. Five other persons who had opened their windows at the report of the explosion were also blown to atoms. We visited the bedrooms of two houses facing one another. In the first there had been three corpses—which had already been removed when we visited the house, but the blood was scattered all over the place. The floor was covered with fragments of the windows and with bloodsoaked underwear. On the ceiling and on the walls, parts of intestines and brains were still visible. In the other house two old per-

sons had been killed while looking down upon the street. We found, suspended from the wall, the pictures of the victims, together with the picture of their son, killed some days before, on the battlefield!

The day following our departure for the United States, the same Zeppelin re-appeared and again threw bombs. This time again, according to the newspapers, several inoffensive persons were killed.

We shall not qualify such acts. It is not sufficient for certain Governments to have reserved to themselves the right to commit them in order to justify them before the conscience of the whole world. We denounce them as flagrant breaches of the above mentioned articles of the Hague Declaration.

The sense and the purpose of these articles are perfectly clear. By prohibiting the bombardment of undefended cities, by requiring notice to be given previously before bombarding fortified places, it was intended to protect the civil population. It was done to allow noncombatants, women, and children to flee, if possible, from the horrible consequences of bombardment.

On August 24th to 25th Antwerp was neither invested nor besieged. No assault had been made against the city, and—without previous advice—in the dead of the night —houses were bombarded and inoffensive and peaceful inhabitants slain.

In the same manner, a few days later, German troops —by a new breach of the conventional rules mentioned above—bombarded the village of Heyst-op-den-Berg and the city of Malines, which were undefended and in which there was not a single Belgian soldier.

One of us visited Malines during the bombardment. The city was deserted. Almost every inhabitant, follow-

ing in the wake of the Belgian army, had taken refuge in the retrenched camp around Antwerp. About every four minutes a German battery fired a shell in the direction of the Cathedral of Saint Rombault. We had occasion to notice, two or three days later, that the residences damaged by the bombardment were all, without exception, in the vicinity of the Cathedral, and that the church itself, one of the most beautiful religious edifices, had been hit and damaged by numerous shells. From a military standpoint there was no reason why the bombardment should have taken place. Such a deed of vandalism can only be explained as a desire for vengeance, or as a desire to create a panic and to terrorize the inhabitants. We denounce it—whatever motive may have prompted it—as a violation of the rules of war and of the conventional pledge made by Germany at the Hague Conference.

IV

THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE BULLETS

THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE BULLETS

THE rules concerning the laws and customs of warfare on land, as adopted by the Hague Conference of 1907, expressly prohibit (article 23) "the use of arms, projectiles and other materials liable to cause useless injuries."

It has been established that, in spite of this regulation, the German army in Belgium used explosive bullets for rifles and revolvers.

Not alone the testimony of various witnesses goes to prove that German soldiers when retreating before the Belgian army at Aerschot used such bullets: the medical report printed below testifies to the same effect:

"MEDICAL REPORT:

"The undersigned, physicians, attached to the 4th Regiment of Lancers of Belgium, declare that after the fight on August 26th, 1914, at Werchter, we were taking care of a soldier from the 5th Regiment of Lancers. The wound which he displayed on his forearm was such that we cannot help believing that it must have been caused by an explosive bullet, as no shrapnel had been fired by the enemy during their engagement with the Lancers.

Signed in Ranst, on August 27th, 1914:

DR. ATTICHAUX,
DR. VANDEMAELE,

in the presence of the Colonel attached to the General Staff: (Signed) Gilain."

What seems to confirm this testimony is the fact that on Wednesday, August 26th, in the evening, after the fight at Werchter, explosive bullets were picked up by officers of the Belgian General Staff on the ground which the enemy had just evacuated.

Two bullets of this description, one for rifle and the other for pistol, are submitted, together with the documents, to the President of the United States by the Belgian Mission. These bullets are accompanied by the following certificate:

"The attached explosive bullets for rifle and revolver were picked up at Werchter on the ground evacuated by the enemy on Wednesday evening, August 26th.

"The Commander attached to the General Staff:

"(Signed) DUBOIS."

V

FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

I

THE ATROCITIES AT LINSMEAU AND ORSMAEL

Belgium, who wanted peace, has been compelled by Germany to resort to arms and to oppose a legitimate defense to an aggression which nothing can justify and which is contrary to the solemn pledges of treaties.

Belgium is bound in honor to fight loyally and to observe all the rules, laws and customs of war.

From the beginning of the invasion of its territory by German troops, the Belgian Government posted, each and every day, in all the towns, and the papers each day printed, instructions warning non-combatant civilians not to offer any resistance to the troops and soldiers invading the country.

The information on which the German Government believes to-day that it can base its contention that the Belgian population contravenes the law of nations and is not worthy of respect, is assuredly wrong.

The Belgian Government protests most vigorously against the allegations produced and against the odious threats of retaliation.

If any contravention of the rules of warfare by Belgian civilians should ultimately be proven, one need only, to appreciate such fact, realize the well-founded overexcitation which the cruelties of the German soldiers are

provoking among the Belgian population, a population which is thoroughly honest but energetic in the defense of its rights and in its respect for humanity.

If we were to publish a list of these atrocities, of which the first ones are here recorded, this would indeed be a long list.

Whole regions have been ravaged and abominable deeds perpetrated in the towns.

A committee attached to the Department of Justice is drawing up a list of these horrors with scrupulous impartiality.

As an example, a few facts are here published, facts which will depict the state of mind and the procedure of certain German troops.

1st. German cavalry, occupying the village of Linsmeau, were attacked by some Belgian infantry and two gendarmes. A German officer was killed by our troops during the fight, and subsequently buried at the request of the Belgian officer in command. None of the civilian population took part in the fighting at Linsmeau. Nevertheless the village was invaded at dusk on August 10th by a strong force of German cavalry, artillery and machine guns. In spite of formal assurances given by the Burgomaster that none of the peasants had taken part in the previous fighting, two farms and six outlying houses were destroyed by gun-fire and burned. All the male population were then compelled to come forward and hand over whatever arms they possessed. No recently discharged firearms were found. Nevertheless the invaders divided these peasants into three groups. Those in one group were bound and eleven of them placed in a ditch, where they were afterwards found dead, their skulls fractured by the butts of German rifles.

2nd. During the night of August 10th German cavalry entered Velm in great numbers; the inhabitants were asleep. The Germans, without provocation, fired on Mr. Deglimme-Gever's house, broke into it, destroyed furniture, looted money, burned barns, hay, corn stacks, farm implements, six oxen, and the contents of the farmyard. They carried off Mme. Deglimme half naked to a place two miles away. She was then let go and was fired upon as she fled, without being hit. Her husband was carried away in another direction and fired upon; he is dying. The same troops sacked and burned the house of a railway watchman.

3rd. Farmer Jef Dierckx, of Neerhespen, bears witness to the following acts of cruelty committed by German cavalry at Orsmael and Neerhespen on August 10th, 11th and 12th. An old man of the latter village had his arm sliced in three longitudinal cuts; he was then hanged head downwards and burned alive. Young girls have been raped and little children outraged at Orsmael, where several inhabitants suffered mutilations too horrible to describe. A Belgian soldier belonging to a battalion of cyclist carbineers who had been wounded and made prisoner was hanged, while another who was tending his comrade was bound to a telegraph pole on the St. Trond road and shot.

4th. On Wednesday, August 12th, after an engagement at Haelen, Commandant Van Damme, so severely wounded that he was lying prone on his back, was finally murdered by German infantrymen firing their revolvers into his mouth.

5th. On Monday, August 9th, at Orsmael, the Germans picked up Commandant Knappen, very seriously

wounded, propped him up against a tree and shot him. Finally they hacked his corpse with swords.

6th. Numerous wounded soldiers, disarmed and unable to defend themselves, have been ill-treated or killed by certain German soldiers. The inquiry brings out new facts of this kind each day.

7th. In different places, notably at Hollogne sur Geer, at Barchon, at Pontisse, at Haelen, at Zelk, German troops have fired on doctors, nurses, ambulances and ambulance wagons.

8th. At Boncelles a body of German troops went into battle carrying a Belgian flag.

9th. On Thursday, August 6th, before a fort at Liège, German soldiers continued to fire on a party of Belgian soldiers, who were unarmed and had been surrounded while digging a trench, after they had hoisted the white flag.

10th. On Thursday, August 6th, at Vottem, near the fort of Loncin, a group of German infantry hoisted the white flag. When Belgian soldiers approached to take them prisoners, the Germans suddenly opened fire on them at close range.

FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

II

THE MASSACRE AT AERSCHOT

Antwerp, August 28th, 1914.

THE Commission of Inquiry on violation of the Law of Nations and the Laws and Customs of War, after an impartial and careful investigation, can make the following statement of its findings:

It appears from precise and concurring testimony that in the entire region of Aerschot the Germans have committed veritable atrocities. The majority of the population fled in terror. On their passage the German troops set fire to farms and houses and furniture, shooting inoffensive citizens whom they found along the road or who were working in the fields.

At Hersselt, north of Aerschot, 32 houses of the village were set on fire; the miller and his son who fled, and about 21 other persons, were killed, all this while no Belgian troops were visible.

The German troops penetrated into Aerschot, a town of 8,000 inhabitants, on Wednesday, August 19th, in the morning. No Belgian forces remained behind. No sooner did the Germans enter the town than they began setting fire to several houses, and, in the rue du Marteau, they shot 5 or 6 inhabitants whom they compelled to leave their houses. In the evening, pretending that a superior German officer had been killed on the "Grande Place" by

the son of the burgomaster, or, according to another version of the story, that a conspiracy had been hatched against the superior commandant, by the burgomaster and his family, the Germans took every man who was inside of Aerschot; they carried them, fifty at a time, some distance from the town, grouped them in lines of four men, and, making them run in front of them, shot at them and killed them afterwards with their bayonets. More than 40 men were found thus massacred.

They gave up the town to be pillaged, taking from the private houses all they could take, breaking furniture and forcing safes. The following day they lined up, three by three, the villagers whom they had arrested the day before, taking one man out of each line. Those they carried off at a distance of 100 meters from the town, taking with them the burgomaster of the town, Mr. Tielemans, and his son, aged fifteen and a half years, and his brother, and shot them.

Later on they forced the remaining villagers to dig holes to bury their victims.

For three whole days they continued to pillage and set fire to everything in sight.

About 150 inhabitants of Aerschot are supposed to have thus been massacred.

The largest part of the city is totally destroyed; five times the Germans tried to set fire to the large church, the interior of which has been sacked. The records of the town have been carried off.

The ambulance attendants, although wearing the Red Cross arm band, were not respected. One of them reports that German troops fired upon him, while he was collecting the wounded, and that they continued to fire even though he showed his Red Cross arm band. More-

over, during the entire day of the 19th, while he was engaged in hospital service, he was threatened and ill-used. A German officer, among others, took him by the head, thrusting against his forehead the butt of a revolver. A wagon driver, the son of the local tax collector, wearing the insignia of the Red Cross, was killed in the Rue de l'Hôpital, in the evening of August 19th, by Germans.

From all the testimony taken it appears that the civil population of Aerschot has in nowise participated in the hostilities, that no shot was fired by them, and all the witnesses agree in pointing out the improbability of the German version, according to which the son of the burgomaster, a youth of fifteen and a half years, and of extremely gentle disposition, is said to have fired upon a superior German officer during the night of August 19th. Still more improbable is the version of a conspiracy organized by the burgomaster. It is to be remarked that if—a thing that is not proved—a German officer was shot on the "Grande Place," it might have happened by a stray bullet, German soldiers being engaged in shooting in the neighboring streets in order to frighten the populace.

Moreover, the burgomaster, a very quiet man, had repeatedly warned his fellow citizens, by means of posters and circulars addressed to every inhabitant of the town, that in case of invasion they were to abstain from any hostile act. These posters were still in evidence when the Germans entered the city and they were shown to them.

The German troops who were traversing localities situated on this side of Aerschot indulged in the same horrors. They fired upon fleeing citizens, and set fire

to and sacked private houses, all this without provocation.

At Rotselaer, for instance, they set fire to about 15 houses. A German officer, addressing an inhabitant whose house was afire, wanted to make him declare, at the point of a pistol, that the fire had been started by the Belgians. When this inhabitant protested, claiming that the Belgians had left the town the previous evening, this officer declared that if the Germans had set fire to the town it was probably due to the fact that the civilians had fired at them, an accusation which also is denied by all the witnesses.

There too the German troops pillaged everything they could lay their hands on during their passage.

Up to the present the Commission has been unable to obtain the testimony of inhabitants of Diest and Tirlemont, which towns were occupied by the Germans on the 18th and 19th of August, 1914, and which are cut off from communication.

However, an inhabitant of Schaffen, a town near Diest, has stated that the same abominations were committed in his locality and in the adjoining villages, Lummen and Molenstede. The whole region has been laid waste. German troops, at an hour's distance from Diest, had begun their work of destruction, all along the highway from Diest to Beeringen. Turning upon Diest, they set fire to everything they could lay hands on, farms, houses, furniture. Arrived at the village of Schaffen, the Germans set fire to the town, massacring the few remaining persons whom they found in the houses or in the streets.

The witnesses mention the names and addresses of 18

persons who are known to him to have been massacred.

Among them are:

The wife of François Luyckx, 45 years old, and her 12-year-old daughter, who were discovered in a sewer and shot.

The daughter of Jean Ouyen, 9 years old, who was shot.

André Willem, 23 years old, sexton, who was tied to a tree and burned alive.

Joseph Reynders, 40 years old, who was killed together with his young nephew, a lad of 10 years.

Gustave Lodts, 40 years old, and Jean Marken, also 40 years old, probably buried alive.

The witness testifies that he himself proceeded to exhume these two and that he buried them afterward in the cemetery.

The village of Rethy, near Turnhout, was the object of devastation and shooting during the day of the 22nd of August by 17 cavalrymen who had penetrated into the village. A young girl of 15 years was shot.

Still more horrible crimes, if that were possible, have been committed by the German troops, on account of the defeat they suffered at the hands of the Belgian army before Malines. The city of Louvain, with its artistic and scientific riches has not been spared. New reports will be submitted very shortly.

(Signed) COOREMAN, President.

ERNST DE BUNSWYCK,

ORTS,

Secretaries.

FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

III

THE DESTRUCTION OF LOUVAIN

Antwerp, August 31st, 1914.

To the Minister of Justice:

SIR:

The Commission of Inquiry begs to make the following report on the deeds of which the city of Louvain and the surrounding localities and the vicinity of Malines have been the theater:

The German army entered Louvain on Wednesday, August 19th, after having set fire to the towns through which it had passed.

From the moment of their entrance into the city of Louvain, the Germans requisitioned lodgings and victuals for their troops. They entered every private bank of the city and took over the bank funds. German soldiers broke the doors of houses abandoned by their inhabitants, pillaged them and indulged in orgies.

The German authorities took hostages; the mayor of the city, Senator Vander Kelen, the Vice Rector of the Catholic University, the Dean of the city; magistrates and aldermen were also detained. All arms, down to fencing foils had been handed over to the town administration and deposited by the said authorities in the Church of St. Peter.

In a neighboring village, Corbeek-Loo, a young matron 22 years old, whose husband was in the army, was surprised on Wednesday, August 19th, with several of her relatives, by a band of German soldiers. The persons who accompanied her were locked in an abandoned house, while she was taken into another house, where she was successively violated by five soldiers.

In the same village, on Thursday, August 20th, German soldiers were searching a house where a young girl of 16 years lived with her parents. They carried her into an abandoned house and, while some of them kept the father and mother off, others went into the house, the cellar of which was open, and forced the young woman to drink. Afterwards they carried her out on the lawn in front of the house and violated her successively. She continued to resist and they pierced her breast with their bayonets. Having been abandoned by the soldiers after these abominable attacks, the girl was carried off by her parents, and the following day, owing to the gravity of her condition, she was administered the last rites of the church by the priest of the parish and carried to the hospital at Louvain. At that time her life was despaired of.

On August 24th and 25th Belgian troops, leaving the entrenched camp round Antwerp, attacked the German army which was outside of Malines.

The German troops were driven back as far as Louvain and Vilvorde.

Upon entering the villages which had been occupied by the enemy, the Belgian army found the whole country devastated. The Germans, while retiring, had ravaged and set fire to the villages, taking with them and driving before them all the male inhabitants.

Upon entering Hofstade, on August 25th, the Belgian soldiers found there the corpse of an old woman who had been killed by bayonet thrusts; she still held in her hand the needle with which she was sewing when she was attacked; one mother and her son, aged about 15 or 16, lay there, pierced with bayonet wounds; one man was found hung.

In Sempst, a neighboring village, were found the corpses of two men partially burnt. One of them was found with his legs cut off at the knees, the other was minus his arms and legs. A workman (whose charred body several witnesses have seen) had been pierced with bayonets, and afterward, still living, the Germans soaked him with petroleum and locked him in a house which they set on fire. An old man and his son had been killed by saber cuts; a cyclist had been killed by bullets; a woman coming out of her house had been stricken down in the same manner.

A witness, whose declaration has been received by Mr. Edward Hertslet, son of Sir Cecil Hertslet, Consul General of Great Britain in Antwerp, declares that he saw, not far from Malines, on August 26th (that is, during the last attack of the Belgian troops), an old man attached by the arms to a beam of a barn. The body was completely burned, the head, the arms and the feet were intact. Further on a body completely stabbed with bayonet thrusts. Numerous corpses of peasants were found in positions of supplication, arms lifted and hands folded in prayer. The Belgian Consul in Uganda, who had entered the Belgian army as a volunteer, reports that everywhere where the Germans had passed through the country was devastated. The few inhabitants who remained in the villages tell of horrors committed by the enemy.

Thus, in Wacherzeel, seven Germans are said to have consecutively violated a woman, afterward killing her. In the same village they undressed to the waist a young boy, threatening him with death by pointing a revolver at his breast, piercing him with their lances, chasing him then into the open field, and shooting after him without, however, hitting him.

Everywhere there were ruin and devastation. At Buecken, numerous inhabitants, including the priest, a man more than 80 years old, were killed.

Between Impde and Wolverthem, two wounded Belgian soldiers were lying near a house which was burning. The Germans threw these two unfortunate men into the raging fire.

The German troops, repulsed by our soldiers, entered Louvain in full panic. Various witnesses assure us that at that moment the German garrison occupying Louvain was advised erroneously that the enemy was entering the town. Immediately the German garrison withdrew toward the station where it met with the German troops that had been repulsed by the Belgians who had just stopped the chase. Everything seems to indicate that a conflict took place between two German regiments. From that moment, under pretext that the Louvain civilians had fired upon them (a fact which is contradicted by all the witnesses and which would hardly have been possible inasmuch as all the inhabitants of Louvain, for several days past, had been obliged to hand their arms over to the local authorities), the German soldiers began to bombard the city. Moreover, not one of the witnesses has seen the body of a single civilian at the place where the affray happened. The bombarding lasted until 10 o'clock at night. Afterward the Germans set fire to the city.

The houses which had not taken fire were entered by German soldiers, who were throwing fire grenades, some of which seem to have been provided for the occasion. The largest part of the city of Louvain, especially the quarters of the "Ville Haute" comprising the modern houses, the Cathedral of St. Peter, the University Halls, with the whole library of the University, its manuscripts, its collections, the largest part of the scientific institutions and the town theater were at that moment being consumed by flames.

The Commission deems it necessary, in the midst of these horrors, to insist on the crime of lèse-humanity which the deliberate annihilation of an academic library —a library which was one of the treasures of our time— constitutes.

Numerous corpses of civilians covered the streets and squares. On the route from Louvain to Tirlemont alone one witness testifies having seen more than fifty of them. On the threshold of houses were found burnt corpses of people, who, surprised in their cellars by the fire, had tried to escape and fell into the heap of live embers. The suburbs of Louvain were given up to the same fate. It can be said that the whole region between Louvain and Malines and most of the suburbs of Louvain have been completely annihilated.

A group of 75 persons, among whom were several notables of the city, such as Father Coloboet and a Spanish priest, and also an American priest, were conducted during the morning of Wednesday, August 26th, to the square in front of the station. The men were brutally separated from their wives and children, and, after having received the most abominable treatment and after repeated threats of being shot, they were driven in front of the German

troops as far as the village of Campenhout. They were locked during the night in the church. The following day at four o'clock a German officer came to inform them that they might all confess themselves and that they would be shot half an hour later. At half past four o'clock they were allowed to go and shortly afterward they were again arrested by a German brigade which obliged them to march in front of them to Malines. Answering a question on the part of one of the prisoners, a German officer told them that they were going to taste some of the Belgian grape-shot before Antwerp. At last they were liberated, on Thursday afternoon, at the entrance to Malines.

Further testimony reveals that several thousand male inhabitants of Louvain, who had escaped the shooting and burning, were sent towards Germany. We do not at this writing know for what purpose.

The fire continued for several days. An eye witness, who, on August 30th, left Louvain, describes the state of the city as follows: "From Weert St. Georges," he says, "I have met nothing except burned villages, crazed peasants, lifting to each comer their arms, as a mark of submission. From each house was hanging a white flag, even from those that had been set on fire, and rags of them were found hanging from the ruins.

"At Weert St. Georges, I inquired from the inhabitants the cause of the German reprisals. They all assured me most absolutely that none of the inhabitants had fired; that all had been previously given up, and that the Germans had taken vengeance on the population because a Belgian soldier of the gendarme corps had killed a Uhlan.

"The population which remained in Louvain took

refuge in the suburb of Heverle, where they are all herded together, the population having been driven from the town by the troops and by the fire.

"The fire began a little above the American College, and the city is entirely destroyed, with the exception of the town hall (Hotel de Ville) and the depot. To-day the fire continued, and the Germans—far from trying to stop it—seem rather to maintain it by throwing straw into the fire, as I have myself seen in the street behind the Hotel de Ville. The Cathedral and the theater have been destroyed and fallen in, and also the library. The town resembles an old city in ruins, in the midst of which drunken soldiers are circulating, carrying around bottles of wine and liquor; the officers themselves being installed in arm chairs, sitting around tables and drinking like their own men.

"In the streets dead horses are decaying, horses which are already completely inflated, and the smell of the fire and of the decaying animals is such that it has followed me for a long time."

The Commission, up to this writing, has been unable to obtain any information regarding the fate of the burgomaster of Louvain, nor regarding the prominent persons taken for hostages.

By facts which have thus far been brought to its attention the Commission reaches the following conclusions:

In this war, the occupation is followed systematically, and is at times even preceded and accompanied, by acts of violence against the civil population, which violations are contrary both to the conventional laws of war and to the most elementary principles of humanity.

The procedure of the Germans is everywhere the same.

They advance along the roads, shooting inoffensive passersby, particularly cyclists, and even peasants occupied in the fields which the Germans traverse.

In the places where they stop the Germans first of all requisition victuals and drinks which they consume to the point of drunkenness; then they begin shooting wildly, sometimes from the interior of empty houses, declaring that the inhabitants have fired the shots. It is then that the firing scenes begin, and murder and especially pillage accompanied by acts of cold cruelty set in, acts which respect neither sex nor age. Even when they claim to know the perpetrator of the deed which they allege, they do not content themselves with executing the culprit summarily, but take advantage of the occasion to decimate the population, to pillage all the habitations and to set fire to them.

After a first massacre, somewhat at random, they shut the men into the church of the town and order all the women to go back to the houses and leave the door open during the night.

In several localities the civil population has been sent to Germany, to be compelled there, it appears, to labor in the fields, as was done in the slave days of olden times. Numerous cases are known where the inhabitants were forced to serve as guides and to make trenches for the Germans. Numerous witnesses testify that in their march, and even in their attacks, the Germans put before them civilians, men and women, in order to prevent our soldiers from firing. Other depositions prove that German detachments do not hesitate to fly either a white flag or the Red Cross flag, so as to approach our troops without suspicion. On the other hand they fire on our ambulances and ill-treat our ambulance nurses. They

ill-treat and even kill our wounded. Clergymen seem to be particularly the object of their attacks. Last, but not least, we have in our possession explosive bullets left behind by the enemy at Wechter, and we are also in receipt of medical certificates testifying that the wounds must have been inflicted by bullets of the kind mentioned above.

Documents and testimonials in support of these facts will be published.

(Signed) Cooreman, President.
(Signed) Count Goblet d'Alviella.

(Signed) Ernst de Bunswyck,
(Signed) Orts,
Secretaries.

VI

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

MEETING OF AUGUST 24TH, 1914

Pillage of Aerschot

Present—Messrs. Cooreman, President; Count Goblet d'Alviella, Ryckmans, Strauss, Van Cutsem, members; Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, secretaries. The chair is taken at 9:30 A. M.

Declaration Made by Mrs. Michiels

Cecile Corens, married to Michiels is heard. She confirms the hereto-attached declaration.

(Signed) COOREMAN,
President.

(Signed) CHEVALIER ERNST DE BUNSWYCK,
Secretary.

Mrs. Michiels:

Supplement to her written declaration.

August 24th, 1914.

"My husband was not questioned. He had served until 9 o'clock the evening before and had not come in contact with any Germans. The declaration written in Flemish was made by me to a foreman of the station, who had been delegated by the Minister. Four other men were shot at the same time as my husband (see declaration of police constable).

"Nobody fired on the Germans. The mayor had several times distributed notices warning the population not

to shoot at the Germans, The mayor's son wished to serve, but he was too young."

The declaration made by Cecile CORENS, married to Louis Gustave MICHIELS (head guard of Aerschot's station), has been taken down by Mr. VAN DAMME, station master at Antwerp (Central station):

"Last Wednesday, 19th August, 1914, my husband was on sentinel duty in the Aerschot station.

"Toward seven o'clock in the morning, he called at the station to know whether he had to leave or not, but he was no longer needed, as the train service was suspended. He then returned home, and as so many of the balls shot by the German troops fell into our house, we took refuge in our cellar. Shortly afterward, about 500 to 600 German soldiers came and forced open our door, and searched everywhere in order to see that there were no weapons in the house. They then came into the cellar and dragged my husband and myself out. They forced me and my 7-months-old child to precede them by 200 meters. We then had to stop in front of a locked house and we were forbidden to say anything further to each other. Whenever I wanted to speak to my husband, five of the Germans shouted 'Houd Smoel' ('Shut up').

"A soldier of a higher grade, probably an officer, ordered me to stand behind the house with my child and after sending my husband into a field, they shot him dead. They afterward came to me and held me and pointing at me with a revolver, made me show them where the sluice-keeper lived. I did so and then they sent me home. After the German soldiers left me I looked for my husband, and ascertained that he had been stabbed by a bayonet in the hip and had been shot through the head. He was already stiff, and, of course, dead. I took his watch and purse as well as his wedding ring, and then returned home. I remained there until Thursday morning, and then the Germans returned and turned me out of my house, which

they burned down. I fled to Lierre with two pieces of bread and butter and my child and then pushed on to Antwerp where I am staying with my brother, Alfons Corens, 9 Michiel Kaai. My brother is employed as craneman by the City of Antwerp.

"The police constable Janssens fled with me from Aerschot to Antwerp, but I do not know where he is now.

"The persons behind whose house I had to stand visited my husband's body with me, but I do not know where they have fled. The tenant's name is Dominien Mielens. He is a dealer in hogs at Aerschot."

Made out in Antwerp, August 22nd, 1914.

(Signed) CECILE CORENS.

AFFIDAVIT OF COMMANDANT GILSON

Commander Georges Gilson, of the 9th Regiment of Infantry, who was to cover the retreat of the Belgian troops from Aerschot, declares that on Wednesday, August 19th, 1914, during the fight which took place between 6 and 8 o'clock in the morning, and while defending the entrance of Aerschot, he noticed between the German lines and the Belgian troops, walking along the street, four women, each bearing a child on her arms; with them were two little girls. The Belgian troops stopped firing to avoid killing. The Germans continued to fire. One of the women had a wounded arm. These women were not allowed to cross the German lines and walk along the road except with the permission of the Germans. Everything seems to indicate that they were pushed ahead of the German troops to prevent the Belgian troops from firing upon them just when the Germans were about to assault them.

The present declaration has been made in the presence of Chev. Ernst de Bunswyck, Chief Secretary of the

Minister of Justice, and Baron de Cartier de Marchienne, Belgian Minister in Peking.

Antwerp, August 22nd, 1914.

The Commander:
(Signed) G. Gilson.

(Signed) Ant. Ernst,
(Signed) E. de Cartier.

MEETING OF AUGUST 25TH, 1914

Present: Messrs. Cooreman, Count Goblet d'Alviella, Strauss, Van Cutsem, Ryckmans, members; Messrs. Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, secretaries.

Session opens at 9 o'clock.

Mr. Ryckmans reports that the visit which he and Mr. Van Cutsem paid at the hospital did not lead to the discovery that the treatment accorded by the Germans to the prisoners constitute characteristic violations of the laws of warfare.

Rev. Mr. Louis Van Roey, Vicar of Aerschot:

"The battle which took place on Wednesday, August 19th, lasted from 7 till 9:30 o'clock. It was announced that the town had capitulated. We went to administer the last sacraments to the dying. The whole town was quiet. The alarm was given at 7 o'clock, and it was announced that all the leading men were to be killed and the town burnt, because a German colonel had been killed. The mayor was shot on Thursday, August 20th. It is said that the colonel was wounded on the 'Grande Place' after having dined with the burgomaster toward half-past six o'clock. The burgomaster had been warning the inhabitants daily not to commit any hostile acts against the Germans.

At Hersselt they locked all the men in a church and I know that it was only through flight that a woman escaped violation. My own servant, who resisted against

a similar outrage, was drowned. At Hersselt, a German soldier first shot in the air and then pretended that the inhabitants had fired."

(Signed) Rev. L. Van Roey.

(N. B.—See Meeting of August 27th.)

Mr. De Preter, Clerk to the Justice of the Peace:

Gentlemen:

"Here are the deeds which took place at Aerschot on the 19th and 20th of August, 1914, and of which I was an eye-witness:

"Wednesday morning, of August 19th, toward 6 o'clock, we heard cannon shots from the direction of Hersselt-Westerloo. Shortly afterward we saw fugitive Belgian soldiers, followed by the inhabitants of Schaluin. The German army entered our town toward half past eight. The soldiers came on in advance and ordered doors and windows to be locked. Seven or eight soldiers went to the church to take down the flag from the steeple. As they could not find the sexton who had the keys, they broke the door open and tore down the flag. The town was then fired upon. In the meantime the army advanced. The Germans filed past the whole day and part of the night. The soldiers in our neighborhood then told us that we might return home and that they would not shoot any more; we then gave them food and drink, and also rhine wine which they eagerly accepted.

"Toward six o'clock in the afternoon, machine guns were placed by the Germans at the corner of the station street, and on the Demer bridge, and they began firing on the town. They also directed two cannon shots at the church door. They also tried to set fire to the church, but did not succeed. During the shooting I took refuge in my cellar. When the shooting stopped, 7 or 8 soldiers came into my house with fixed bayonets, and said that I had shot. My wife who, in the meantime, had gone up-

stairs, was slapped in the face twice and then driven out of the house at the point of the bayonet.

"I was then taken prisoner and driven, together with the servant, to the Old Men's Institute. When we arrived there we saw the old men, women and nuns (including an old person of 80) all standing in a row with their hands up. After having stood there for about two hours, the men were driven forward along Station street, Langensteenweg and Leuwensche street, to reach at last the camp which they had fixed up beyond the 'Atelier.'

"We encountered many fires on the way, including the house of the justice of the peace, which was ablaze. We were made to halt before burning houses and were compelled to contemplate this sad sight. When we reached the camp, our hands were tied behind our backs and we were driven into a potato field where we had to pass the night. There were about 50 of us.

"At dawn, the mayor who, together with his son and brother, was also bound, was questioned. The officer seemed to listen willingly to the testimony of the mayor and then went away. Half an hour afterward another officer came along, who called out: 'The mayor, his brother and his son must be shot through the head.' We were then placed on rows of three. One victim out of each row was chosen to be shot. We were then ordered to turn our backs toward these unhappy people and a quarter of an hour later we heard several shots fired. Vengeance was carried out.

"Here are the names of a few of the victims:

"Joseph, Louis and Emile Tielemans, Prosper Mertens, Omer Nys, Bruno Tuerlinckx, Victor Page.

"As we were on the point of going home an officer came along and in a loud voice told us that if one more shot were fired the whole town would be destroyed. As we turned away, another band of citizens were brought to the camp, as prisoners. I cannot say what became of these unfortunate people.

"We were hardly home for a few minutes when we were told that the town was to be bombarded. I asked the soldiers to be allowed to leave town, to which they agreed. On the Schaluin almost every house was ablaze and the soldiers were busy plundering. They were carting away wine, chickens and vegetables.

"It is the 140th Regiment which treated us so cruelly. Every house of the hamlet of Aurodenberg was, without exception, burned down."

(Signed) De Preter.

Mr. Constant Hubert Van Hagendoren, Station Master at Aerschot, has nothing to say about the ill-deeds committed by the Germans at Aerschot. Toward 6 o'clock on Wednesday morning he heard shooting. A train packed with fugitives left toward 7 o'clock. Later a few Belgian soldiers passed. The commanding officer asked him the way toward the Chaussée de Louvain. He left, and, says Mr. Van Hagendoren, "we then withdrew and, according to instructions, took the cash along with us. We left at 7:20 in the direction of Louvain. At Rotselaer we got out and walked toward Haecht, from whence we went to Malines and then to Antwerp."

Mr. Jules Janssens, Chief Police Constable at Aerschot:

"The Germans came into my street toward 8 o'clock in the morning. They broke in doors and windows. Some neighbors opened their doors, the Germans went through the houses without doing any harm. A herald then passed, proclaiming that doors and windows were to be left open and ordered the men to come outside. The men were taken away. Then I heard shots; they had shot 6 persons. I locked myself into my cellar. I was called to go to the mayor at half past seven. The Germans were asking for food. Toward 9 o'clock, two officers, including one commanding officer, stated that the civilians had

shot. I protested. They told us that in any case they would keep us as hostages. I told them that it was unfortunate, as the mayor had advised all to be calm, and posters to that effect had been placed everywhere. I led them to the spot where one of these notices, signed by the mayor, was posted. They told the same thing to the mayor as they told me. I fled and hid myself in a cellar. Shooting was heard toward 7.30. They were still shouting 'er Uit' ('Come out of there'). We did not come out. At that moment they entered our house and made us come upstairs, stating that we had shot. I had to accompany the soldiers through the house, which they inspected. As nothing was found, they did nothing to the house and did not commit any violence.

"We were not troubled during the remainder of the night. Toward 7 o'clock the following morning they told us that we might go out. We walked toward the Rue Neuve. There we were told that only women and children might pass. We returned to our cellar. Toward 9 o'clock the Germans returned; they made us undergo a corporal examination. Then we were ordered out of town. About 80 from that street left without being molested.

"I do not know of any inhabitants having fired. Soldiers defended the outskirts. I know nothing about the death of a German officer. I only heard about that in Antwerp. It was at the moment that we fled that I heard from some refugees that the mayor was dead."

(Signed) JANSSENS.

Mr. Ernest Percy, sub-station-master at Aerschot, knows nothing of what happened at Aerschot. The testimony of the chief is confirmed. He was told that his sister had been burned alive in her house while hiding in the cellar with her husband and child. The husband and child were injured. The husband is in the Aerschot hospital, and the child in the Antwerp hospital. The woman, who had fainted, remained in the burning house.

He was told that the civilian population had not fired at the Germans. The latter fired upon themselves. Their pretexts are false.

Mr. François Théré, Postmaster at Aerschot:

"The last train left Aerschot on the 19th instant toward 7 o'clock. I then returned home. The Germans then came and ordered us out of the houses. They drove us in the direction of the Demer Bridge. They called us 'Schweinevolk' and 'Schweinehunde' (pigs). They forced us to remain on the bridge. The mayor met them and informed them who he was. The officer ordered him to stand next to me, threatening to shoot him. They ordered the women to return home. Then, when there was a large enough crowd of us, 300 to 400, they led us to the Chaussée de Diest. We remained there until 1 o'clock. The mayor then told us that we might return home, subject to depositing our arms, if we had any, and not going out in groups. I returned home. Nothing was found on me and they left me alone.

"Toward 7 o'clock we heard shots. We then hid ourselves in the cellar where the police constable joined us. At a certain moment they rang the bell. I left my cellar with two of my daughters. The Germans claimed that shots had been fired. I said this was not so. Everybody left the cellar. We all went up to the second story. A soldier warned us to run away, saying that the town was to be reduced to ashes. After having searched everywhere and found nothing they left. We remained in the house. In the course of the night, we heard shooting several times.

"On Thursday morning toward 6 o'clock the neighbors warned us that the officers had advised them to flee toward Niewrode. We followed that road. The Chemist, Mr. Léotard, warned us not to leave, because, he said, the men were kept back. Notwithstanding this, the women went on. We met people who were returning and who informed us of the death of the mayor. In order

to justify these deeds the Germans pretended that civilians had fired on them, but this is merely a pretext; I can swear that the mayor's son did not fire at the German officer. He is gentleness itself. Besides, I cannot say whether it is true that a German officer has been shot."

(Signed) F. THÉRÉ.

Mr. Remi Terweduere, head of the Aerschot Registry Office, had promised the mayor to remain at his post. He was on the Town Hall steps just as the Germans entered. "The Germans told the mayor that three shots had been fired by civilians. I had to have all the doors and windows opened; the Germans entered everywhere, ransacking whatever they came across.

"I also saw German soldiers on the roofs; they displaced a few slates here and there in order to allow the fire to get a better hold."

(Signed) TERWEDUERE.

Captain Jules Bruyère, of the 9th Infantry Regiment, had a temporary mission to fulfill at Charleroi. He met some Belgian refugees who came from Ramillies. This was during the night of the 20th to the 21st. They were women carrying children. They told me that they had been separated from their husbands at Ramillies. The women were herded together in the Public Square. The Germans selected the young girls and young women, who were completely undressed and most of them violated by the soldiers. Some officers were present. The old women were released. Other deeds do not appear to be known. It does not appear as if the civil population were hostile.

(Signed) CAPTAIN BRUYÈRE.

Alphonse De Clercq, shopkeeper at Aerschot, deposes that as soon as the Germans arrived on Wednesday they pillaged his hosiery shop. Next door they broke the windows of a confectioner and pillaged his shop also.

(Signed) A. DE CLERCQ.

In the presence of Mr. Cooreman, President, and Antoine Ernst de Bunswyck, Secretary, the following testimony was received.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT, AUGUST 25TH, 1914

Mr. André Douwen, 56 years old, liquor dealer in Aerschot:

"On Wednesday, August 19th, the Germans made their entrance in Aerschot toward 10 o'clock. They requisitioned 5 men in the Rue du Marteau, who were to show them the way, and then, 5 minutes from their homes, they shot them. The German soldiers claim that the civilians had fired at them, but this is absolutely false. Besides, the mayor had several times warned the inhabitants that they were to abstain from committing hostile deeds; he had even requested the major of the civic guard of Verviers, who was just then in Aerschot, not to shoot. The civic guard of Verviers consequently withdrew.

"In the course of the evening the Germans smashed with hatchets the door of every house which had been abandoned by their owners, and these houses were pillaged.

"As I did not leave my house I was not present at the scenes which are said to have taken place at the 'Grande Place.' I did not see the mayor arrested.

"On Thursday morning soldiers came to my house. I accompanied them. I was led a prisoner to the field, where I remained for hours; then I was led to a stable where I remained another hour. There I met Mr. Pletinea, Justice of the Peace, who had already been locked up. Afterward I was taken to a field where I had to help burying the dead. These were the civilians who had been shot in the course of the morning, including the mayor, Mr. Tillemans, his brother Emile and his son, aged 15 and a half years, and about a dozen more people.

"We were then forced to dig a big hole in which other corpses were to be buried.

"At 7 o'clock I was liberated together with four or five aged persons, whereas the others had to remain there until noon the following day; they were still compelled to dig holes in the ground in which were to be buried the civilians (more than 150) who had been shot.

"Since then, men are daily locked up in the church, and are sometimes kept there for two and even three days." Mr. Douwen left Aerschot this morning toward 6 o'clock with a German pass which was granted to him by the "German mayor of Aerschot." (The Major of the third battery of the 24th Infantry Regiment.) He had received it on pretext that he had to go for his wife at Heyst-op-den-Berg.

German troops passed through Aerschot uninterruptedly for two or three days and two nights, and since then more troops pass through daily. Mr. Douwen does not know what led the Germans to these deeds, but he is sure that the Aerschot people did not shoot. He is also convinced that Mr. Tillemans' son did not fire any shot. He is unable to say whether the German troops outraged women and girls.

They stole his horse, carriage, motorcycle, bicycle, wearing apparel, all the liquors and wines with which his shop was stocked, all his merchandise. They smashed his safe. Half of the town is burned. No fires have occurred since the day before yesterday.

(Signed) DOUWEN.

Annex to the above report:

Hersselt, August 21st, 1914.

To His Honor the Governor of the Province of Antwerp.

SIR:—

I have the honor to bring to your notice that last Tuesday, toward 2 o'clock in the afternoon, a few German soldiers arrived here. A few minutes later they came

along with numerous forces, passing through the Diest-Averbode-Westerloo-Herenthals-Zoerle-Parwys and Toestelt-Wolfsdonck highways. It is impossible for me to say just how many soldiers passed; perhaps from 4,000 to 5,000, and they quartered here. Twenty-three civilians belonging to our village were shot; one woman was so frightened that she threw herself into a well and was drowned. Thirty-two houses (almost all farm houses) were destroyed by fire. In some villages the Germans loosened the cattle and drove them away. There hardly remains one house in the village which has not been plundered. The German troops passed through continually during the whole of Wednesday and Thursday.

(Signed) F. VERLINDEN,
Mayor of Hersselt.

P. S. We do not receive any letters here, nor can we send any mail, as the mailcart has been smashed to pieces and there are no mail carriers at present.

MEETING OF AUGUST 26TH, 1914

Present: Messrs. Cooreman, Count Goblet d'Alviella, Strauss, Ryckmans, Van Cutsem, members; Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, secretaries.

The chair is taken at 9 o'clock.

Miss Anna Verelst, born at Aerschot on the 15th of January, 1891:

"I did not undergo any hardships. The women do not appear to have suffered. I left Aerschot at 10 o'clock on Thursday morning. A German soldier told me that they had found a German officer killed at the Mayor's house. The Germans declared that the shooting and the reprisals were the result of the townspeople having shot. I do not believe that a single inhabitant fired a shot. A German

soldier told me that they were not allowed to touch the women."

After the reading of the above, Miss Verelst declares that she has nothing to add and signs:

(Signed) ANNA VERELST.

Mr. Joseph Rymen, of Schaffen-lez-Diest, hands in the following manuscript declaration, which he confirms:

"I cannot refrain from communicating to you all that happened to me while the Germans occupied Diest last Tuesday, 18th August; I live in Schaffen and my occupations require my presence in Antwerp almost daily. I wanted to leave as usual, when a few Uhlans were reported as being in the neighborhood. They had already been seen several times in the course of the last few days, so that not much notice was taken of this. Shortly afterward these Uhlans had an encounter with the carabiniers, of whom only a few circulated in the town, their duty being to guard the high roads and to discover the sixteen Uhlans who had several times been seen at Schaffen. Four or five of these Uhlans were killed and as many wounded in the hamlet of Schoonaerde. The other Uhlans fled, and we thought that, just as before, we were freed from them. Alas! Half an hour later, thousands of Germans came. A great many inhabitants had already left the place the previous day, after hearing of the horrors committed at the time of the battle of Haelen a few days before, and in other communities. The people did not know what to do. It was too late to run away. I wanted to hide quickly a few souvenirs which were dear to me, in the garden, when the Uhlans were upon me, and cried: 'Mains en l'air et tranquille' (Hands up and keep quiet). I immediately obeyed. These Uhlans then took me prisoner before all my people. They then immediately shot dead Alfons Wouters, 39 years of age, who was running away with his 80-year-old mother. I was forced to follow them and heard that other people were shot while the remainder tried to take to flight.

They dragged me across the village and set ablaze all the houses they found on the road. The cattle and hogs were chased into the streets and were afterwards caught and taken for their stores. As they led me past the fires I had to witness horrible sights. They started their work of destruction about an hour's distance from Diest along the Diest-Beeringen highway. They set the 'Zwarten Ring' inn ablaze after having eaten and drunk there, and as a reward they shot the proprietor dead. They continued to burn down all they came across on their passage, first making themselves master of all food products and fodder. Besides this they burned all the hay they came across, also the wheat in the fields in the neighborhood and on either side of the aforesaid highway. On reaching the village they shot the two brothers Verheyen, 30 and 32 years of age, who were still on their farms. Besides this they pierced them with their lances, threw them into a neighboring ditch and then covered them with a little grass. They then set fire to the whole village and to the thickly populated hamlet of Schoonaerde, with the exception of two stables and the nuns' school, the former for their horses. They also spared the Charles Serneels Castle, where they immediately installed themselves with a few officers and fixed up a telephone. In the course of this sinister work they carried their atrocities to such a pitch as to kill the few people still to be found in the streets or in the houses.

"Here is the list of those killed:

1st. Frans Broeders, 45 years old, blacksmith, whose arms were broken and who was then shot and ripped open by means of lances.

2nd. Enkels' son, 25 years old, who was in the street with his cart. He had to give up his horse and cart and was then shot dead.

3rd. Adrien Derboven, 78 years old, mason, who received a thrust of a lance in the back and was shot through the side (lived one day afterward).

4th. Alfons Derboven, 45 years old, mason, shot while

taking to flight and whose abdomen was ripped open by means of a lance.

5th. Daughter of Jean Oeyen, 9 years old, with August Van den Broeck, who held this child by the hand, were shot.

6th. Mrs. Luyckx, 45 years of age, as well as her daughter, aged 12, who had hidden herself in a sewer, were shot dead.

7th. Louis Laermans, aged 70, who was shot dead while his farm was ablaze.

8th. Louis Baren, aged 42, who was ill and had to remain at home, burned in his blazing house.

9th. Andre Willems, 23 years of age, sacristan, was bound to a tree, covered with straw and then burned alive.

10th. Joseph Reynders, 40 years of age, and his little nephew, aged 10, were found killed.

11th. Alfons Vandervelpen, 24 years old, was shot dead while trying to escape.

12th. Guillaume Hanegreefs, Jr., 17 years old, shot dead while trying to escape.

13th. Gustave Loots, 40 years old, and his brother-in-law, Jean Macken, 40 years of age, both dairy produce dealers, probably buried alive.

14th. François Gile, 24 years old, shot dead and then thrown into the water.

15th. Hendrika Zekers, an old woman of Molenstede, found shot dead.

"The Reverend Vicar was hanged twice. When he was on the point of dying they liberated him. They then turned him with his eyes staring at the sun, and he had to remain in that position for an hour; when he lowered his eye-lids they struck him with the butt end of a gun and shouted out to him: 'Have another good look at the sun which you saw rise but which you will not see set.' After this martyrdom they led him to the church, which they did not succeed in burning down; they smashed everything they could lay their hands on, after which

they installed their horses there. They then left the priest thinking he was dead. He came to himself and managed to overtake the other refugees in the fields and woods. He was almost dying and he was dressed in citizen's clothes which the peasants brought to him.

"I was obliged to be the weak and powerless looker-on of all these dreadful deeds. They then again led me to the hamlet of Schoonaerde (nearer Diest) where their troops passed in extraordinary numbers. Here they gave me as companions two peasants of Meldert, whom they had taken prisoners, together with their horses and carts. These men were named Schepers and Poel. We had then to approach all the blazing houses in order to find pails and barrels from which their horses could drink. We had to draw water from a neighboring well, and were continually threatened with their revolvers. We were then compelled to walk in the first rows through the town of Diest, which had that day been taken possession of by the Germans. Meantime, we had to load the carts with all the bread we could find at the bakers. When this work did not progress quickly enough according to their liking, they held a revolver to my chest. We thus loaded two cartfuls of loaves. I had then again to march at their head to direct them toward Montaigu. When we approached the village they halted a few minutes. As their sentinels placed themselves at each side of the road, I took advantage of one moment to escape through a hedge in the field and was immediately followed by a crowd and by pistol shots. Thanks to the darkness I was able to escape. I reached a farm at midnight and rested there until 3 o'clock, and then I continued my flight toward Schaffen, where I found my family and neighbors hidden in fields and woods near a brook. I then went to the Serneele Castle with three other people and asked the German officers' permission to bury my parents and acquaintances in the graveyard. This was granted to me. We received a German passport, and a German officer accompanied us. They also ordered us to bury at the same

time the bowels of a cow. Underneath the same we discovered the feet of a person whom they had buried head downward. In this way we found Gustave Loots and Jean Macken, already mentioned. According to the declarations of Mrs. Loots, these people must have been buried alive. We had to bury all these bodies in one grave. Then we were allowed to return. I then overtook the other refugees. Useless to describe the scenes which I witnessed. It is quite impossible to describe the life of these people, deprived of everything. One of the wounded has just died.

"It appears that the Germans behaved in the same barbarous manner in the neighborhood of Lummen-Molenstede-Hersselt."

(Signed) JOSEPH RYMEN.

Mrs. Joseph Claes-Toussaint, 30 years of age:

"On Thursday, 20th August, I, my aunt, my husband, and myself had taken flight. In a certain part of Aerschot, my husband was shot in the back and killed by the Germans, while carrying our child. The Germans had got on to a roof in Aerschot and in this way shot at the fugitives."

(Signed) MRS. JOSEPH CLAES-TOUSSAINT.

Edmond Amter, workman, 45 years, rue des Joyeuses Entreés, 61 Louvain:

"On my way to Louvain last Saturday I was arrested in Sas Campenhout by Germans, from half past eleven till 4 o'clock. We were then released. There were eighteen of us. A non-commissioned officer took all our money from us." (Signed) AMTER.

Jules Crabe, of Rotselaer, employé aged 19:

"On Thursday evening, the German troops coming from Aerschot burned down about 15 houses. They locked the men up in the church from the evening until

the morning, and then let them escape. The Germans had not been attacked. A German officer, threatening with his revolver, wished me to declare that the Belgians had set fire to the place. I replied that the Belgians had left the town the day before. The officer said: 'Then they must have fired.' The Germans pillaged everything they could find. A non-commissioned German officer told me that it grieved him to act in this way, but that the Belgians were to blame as they had started it."

After reading the above, the witness confirms and signs.

(Signed) J. CRABE.

He adds: "On Thursday afternoon when coming from Muysen to Rotselaer, with three companions, we met some Germans at the Bridge of Haecht. They called out to us 'come.' I saw three of them. One of us went forward, with his bicycle in his hand. We fled; the Germans shot. One of my comrades was killed. The one who went forward was wounded."

After reading the above, the witness confirms and signs.

(Signed) J. CRABE.

Mr. Thomas Courtois, school teacher at Wacherzeel-Wechter, 52 years old:

"The fugitives who passed through our village advised us to take to flight and the commander of the Belgian troops told us to follow this advice. We did this and the whole village was emptied. Notwithstanding this I learn that the Germans afterward burned about 35 out of 110 houses." (Signed) TH. COURTOIS.

Mr. Louis Leflot, student of theology at the Grand Séminaire of Malines, born 1st June, 1891, living in Aerschot:

"The Belgian troops arrived in Aerschot on the 18th and asked me to join the ambulance service, as they foresaw the battle which was to take place. The Germans

entered on the 19th, and while I was picking up two wounded people, they continued to shoot on me, although I pointed out to them my Red Cross badge. While looking after the sick I was all day long threatened and maltreated by the Germans. An officer held a revolver to my forehead and told me 'that the courage of the Belgians made the enemy jealous.' On Thursday evening the Germans bombarded Aerschot (reprisals) from 7 o'clock to 11 o'clock, feigning that the Belgians had fired. I am sure that the son of the mayor, who was a very gentle and timid boy, did not fire at an officer. I left Aerschot at 3 o'clock Wednesday morning."

After reading the above the witness confirms and signs.

(Signed) L. LEFLOT.

Frans Brusselaers, fireman of the State Railway, living at Aerschot:

"I went to Aerschot on Saturday to look for my wife and children. At Beggynedyk, a German, threatening me with his revolver, forced me to show him the way. I then came to Aerschot and found my wife. My house is destroyed by bullets and howitzers and to the knowledge of my wife, the Germans continued destroying up till Friday. I escaped with my wife to Beggynedyk. My wife, while on the road, found the body of a sluice-keeper, Bruyninckx's son; he was burned by the Germans because the bridge had been left open. There are still Germans in Aerschot."

(Signed) BRUSSELAERS, FRANS.

Mr. Henry Percy, Proprietor, 26 rue de la Justice, Antwerp:

"My son Willie belonged to the Brussels Red Cross Ambulance. He was doing motor car service between Brussels and Hannut in order to pick up the wounded. He bore the Red Cross badge. The vicar of Velm wrote me in a letter which I received on Thursday, 13th, that

my son "had passed through the hands of the Prussians and that he would do all he could for him." Since then I have not received any definite news, except that the papers stated that he had been found bound and shot dead."

After reading the above, witness confirms and signs.

(Signed) HENRY PERCY.

Mr. Dieudonné Van de Meulebroeck, aged 53, coal merchant at Aerschot:

"I cannot say whether an officer was wounded on Wednesday evening on the Grande Place. This seems improbable as nobody was allowed to leave the house. On Wednesday morning, toward 8 o'clock, the Germans came to my house, then left. Later they broke in the doors of my neighbor's house and fired shots. My wife went out and said they ought not to do this as the houses were inhabited by railway workmen. They left off and then went further along. Toward half past one I saw them set fire to the whole of the Rue du Marteau. I saw them fire at a man.

"The Aerschot townspeople did not help to defend the town. The mayor had asked the population not to commit any hostile deeds. He had posted placards to that effect. Circulars also to this effect had been sent out two or three times. I left on Thursday toward 1.30 or 2 o'clock."

(Signed) VAN DE MEULEBROECK.

F. Huysmans, litter bearer, of Aerschot:

"I saw that the son of the public receiver who had been sent by his father for bread for the Germans quartered at his place was shot dead by the Germans in the Rue de l'Hopital; he bore his badge. That took place on Wednesday toward 7 o'clock. The Germans fired to frighten the people.

"I was in Aerschot yesterday. All was quiet, but the Germans seemed to be afraid. Only some women of the lower classes remained over. They seemed to enjoy themselves with the Germans, but I do not believe that the Germans have outraged the women and girls."

(Signed) Fr. Huysmans.

The President communicates to the Committee a letter received from Mr. Bulcke, calling its attention to the bombarding of the town of Antwerp by a Zeppelin on the night of 23-24th August.

The Committee decides to bring the matter before the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as the fact mentioned by the papers that floating mines had been laid, this in contradiction to regulations of The Hague Convention.

Which is noted.

The President:
(Signed) Cooreman.

The Secretaries:
(Signed) Orts.

MEETING OF THE 27TH AUGUST, 1914

Present: Messrs. Cooreman, President; Ryckmans, Strauss, Goblet d'Alviella, Van Cutsem, members; Messrs. Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, Secretaries.

The chair is taken at 9 o'clock.

The Committee has taken Mr. Zech, lawyer, as assistant secretary:

Rev. Mr. Van Roye, vicar at Aerschot, refers to his deposition of 25th inst., regarding the attempt to outrage his servant. He cannot affirm for sure that this has taken place, but she was found drowned the next day. As regards the servant of the priest of Hersselt, the facts are quite proved: she only escaped being outraged by taking to flight. The next day she told the vicar of Hersselt that

several German officers had come to her room. At Hersselt 32 houses were burned and 18 people killed.

"Paul Verlinden of Aerschot told me that 40 of them had been herded together and that at a certain signal they had to run and were then shot down.

"I myself escaped a shot. The Germans were against the religious authorities, pretending that shots had been fired from the church steeple. This is false."

Franz Pessendorfer, Gardener at Sempt:

"The Germans slept in Van Dam's house. Both father and son were in the cellar. They came out toward morning and were then shot dead and stabbed with lances. The neighbors related this to me and I saw the corpses, which had been pierced by lances. They had the bodies buried by a neighbor named Pickaert. They burned down houses along the road, as well as haystacks. My parents' house, which was open, and inhabited by my old father of 75 and my sister, is also burned down. I counted 11 burned houses."

(Signed) FRANZ PESSENDORFER.

Maria Janssens, married to Joannes Bulens Hofstade:

"Last Friday afternoon I saw a young woman who had been hanged to a tree with a rope, about a meter from the ground. This had taken place on the Tervueren highway. I saw a good many people with their hands tied behind their backs and whom the Germans chased away, and a boy whose neck had been pierced by a lance. He was already dead."

(Signed) MARIA JANSSENS.

Frans Verschoren, Professor at Lierre:

"I met fugitives from Haecht who had witnessed the atrocities inflicted. Five cyclists had been arrested. Four were shot and covered with bayonet wounds. The fifth had been struck with the butt end of a musket and is now,

it seems, in the Louvain Hospital. His name is Charles or Frans de Coster.

"I also heard it said, but cannot vouch for its truth—that Mr. Keerbergen's son had had his hands amputated and that the stumps had been turned into the unfortunate man's chest.

"The people of this village had not fired. Witnesses have assured me of this.

"Thirty out of 105 houses at Wackerzeele, near Haecht, have been burned down. The population first fled, but then were made to return."

(Signed) Fr. Verschoren.

Max Dartois (Horse Guard Squadron), Liège:

"I can certify that none of the villagers shot at Visé. I was the last to leave the town.

"The soldiers did not shoot from the roadway, but from the yard belonging to a house, at Lixhe, near the water pass, and this might have lead the Germans to think that the villagers had fired. Witness since then learned that the inhabitants of that house had been shot.

"From investigations which I made, it seems that no fighting took place between German soldiers and townspeople at Visé, but at first there were Belgian soldiers in Visé. I can certify that at 1 p. m. we had shot about 250 Germans. I had ordered no shots to be fired except when sure. We remained there (at the ford) for three hours.

"I must also state that the peasants were not armed; they even complained about this. They only remained at their windows and I told them to withdraw."

The witness also attests that there was not a sign of a street fight having taken place in Lixhe.

"At Linsmeau, a German officer of the dragoons was killed in a charge against a squadron of light cavalrymen of the Liège Guard. The officer was stripped by a cavalryman with the intention of returning the things to the family.

"These objects were left in the care of the parish priest

in the presence of the commanding officer of the corps. I had issued orders to the farmers to have the German officer buried in the middle of a beet field. This officer had been killed by a shot in the neck, just as he was ordering the Belgians to surrender. From Opheylissen I, together with the whole squadron, witnessed the fusillade directed against Linsmeau and the fires which were lighted at three different points in the vicinity."

(Signed) M. DARTOIS.

Charles Gys, fireman-engineer, Sempst (bridge):

"The Germans came to our village at 5 o'clock last Tuesday morning. While the fighting was going on they called out all the men of our neighborhood and made them stand against the wall of Ashbroeck, with their hands up; when they left they took four men along with them, made them precede them with tied hands, same as happened in Wolverthem, but we did not see them back. They had not to show them the way, as they had already been four or five days in the village. Out of the 35 houses near the bridge 12 were set on fire. They took two of our clocks along with them."

(Signed) KAREL GYS.

Jan Joseph Gys:

"I witnessed the same facts as those related by my son."

(Could not sign.)

Rev. Count Xavier de Ribaucourt, Military Chaplain, volunteer attached to the first regiment of Carabiniers (6th Army Division):

"On the 25th August I ascertained that in the village of Hofstade, near Malines, an old woman of about 60 years of age had been killed by a dozen bayonet thrusts, as the Germans drew back before the carabiniers. She still held a needle and cotton in her hand, with which

she had been sewing. We found her in her house. We had her placed on a stretcher along the roadway.

"I also ascertained that a young man of about 16 years, one of whose arms had been cut off a little below the elbow, and who was still alive when our troops entered the village, was shot dead by the Germans.

"I also ascertained that a carabinier having been lightly wounded on the railway embankment, was killed by means of blows administered on the head with the butt end of a musket. The head was smashed in.

(Signed) Count Xavier de Ribaucourt.

Jules de Leender, coppersmith at Aerschot:

"Shots were fired by the Germans among each other for their amusement; they fired into the market and in the street, also on the Groote market. Immediately afterwards, toward seven o'clock, they started the firing of their cannons and began burning the houses. At night, they walked round the town, smashed the shop windows and threw everything out of my shop into the street. In the morning, I managed to run away."

(Signed) J. De Leender.

Rev. Ernest Leers, vicar of Aerschot:

"Notwithstanding the red cross badge which I wore and which I showed to the Germans, they shot at me Wednesday morning. All the furniture belonging to Mr. E. Geens, the vicar, and to the dean were demolished and smashed to atoms and the pieces were thrown into the steeple, after having been steeped in paraffin, thus the Germans tried five times to set the church on fire.

"Two hundred houses have been pillaged and burned down; the rest have been emptied. An old woman of 90 years of age was kept a prisoner in the street the whole night long. All the town registers have been taken away, as well as two chests of gold and silver."

(Signed) E. Leers.

Paul Verlinden, Wine Merchant at Aerschot:

"Two or three houses had already been burned down in the morning. Toward 7 o'clock in the evening we were herded together four by four. About four of us were just in the light caused by a burning house. Four men had to come forward, and the soldiers shot the group. I feigned death and escaped by hiding in a potato field. I noticed that they afterward visited the dead and gave the finishing stroke to one who still lived. I counted 41 corpses the next day. I first hid in a villa. Almost starved to death, I gave myself over to the Germans, who let me go the next day, because I said I was a Dutchman. In the course of that day, I was several times required to transport German wounded and to attend to the stores. With other Belgians I was obliged to bury the Mayor and his son.

"Among my group of four, a professor of Louvain, Robert Carrette, rue des Récollets, was killed. The Germans say that a German superior officer has been killed, but the Belgians did not do this. A Belgian soldier, living rue de Malines, dressed himself in citizen's clothes in a house and went on shooting, but I was not an eye-witness of this." (Signed) P. VERLINDEN.

Count Harold de Hemptinne, volunteer, living at Ghent:

"At three o'clock in the morning of 25th and 26th August, I saw in Sempst, near Malines, a man from whom two legs had been cut off up to the knees by the Germans; he was half charred.

"I also found another one whose arms and legs were cut off. He was charred. I came across a boy of less than 14 years old whose body was riddled with bayonet thrusts.

"These horrors must have been committed by the Germans before their withdrawal from Sempst.

"Before leaving, the Germans must have taken all the

men of the neighboring villages along with them. They will have to work for them in the trenches.

"I met fugitive women who told me that during the preceding day's fighting, they had to place themselves before the Germans. They had to bend forward when the Germans fired, and had to resume standing position when the Belgians fired.

"After reading the above the witness confirms and signs."

(Signed) DE HEMPTINNE.

"Mr. Emile Carrette, alderman, aged 74 years, was among the 45 men. As he could not follow, he was pushed along by the butts of the rifles and trampled upon by horses.

"I do not know what has become of him."

MEETING OF 28TH AUGUST.

MORNING SESSION.

Present: M. Cooreman, President; Van Cutsem, Count Goblet d'Alviella, Strauss, Ryckman, members; Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, Secretaries; Zech, Assistant Secretary.

The Commission joins to its official report a letter from the municipal authorities of Rethy and a note of M. Cerfout, Engineer of the Road Building Department, concerning the atrocities committed at Visé.

The Commission then receives the declaration of the witnesses:

Sterkendries (Francis), Sacristan at Linsmeau:

"On Monday next, it will be three weeks since the arrival of the German troops in our village. (600 inhabitants, 110 houses.) The people did not shoot; they

did not even have firearms in their possession. The Burgomaster had ordered everyone to keep quiet.

"A German officer was killed by soldiers of the Liège Civil Guard passing in a motor car. The Germans did not see the car and so they all said that it was our people who had killed their man. On the high road they burned 8 farms along the high road. Monday evening they yard and burned his farm. They took a lot of money in a café nearby. The whole village was looted; the Germans taking money, jewels, watches, provisions, clothes; after that they took all the men and bound them. The women said that meanwhile they had a very hard time; they would not say more. The Germans led all the men to a meadow, insulting them all the way, calling them 'wretched Belgians,' threatening them with death. They made them swear not to fire on their troops.

"All these things took place on Monday; the enemy left on Tuesday.

"The Germans insisted that their officer had been killed by some inhabitants. That's why they burned the 8 farms along the high road. Monday evening they killed 18 of our people. My brother-in-law found their corpses buried in his own field on Thursday. All their heads had been broken with the butt ends of the muskets. Some of the men killed were the same who had wanted to bury the German officer.

"Here are the names of the victims:

Debootz (G. Gh.)

Bourguignon (Constant) and his two sons, Jules and Constant

Mouillard (Jules)

Jonniaux (Joseph)

Bitanne (Antoine)

Triffaux (Isidore)

Tirraad (Leon)

Delhé (Edouard)

Perchen (Henri)

Jonniaux (Lucian) and wife, born Verdael.
Desirant (Leopold)."
(Signed by the Witness) FRANCIS STERKENDRIES.

2. M. Chaudoir, of Hamoir, commanding officer of the cavalry corps of the Civic Guard of Liege:

"I was at the fights round about Lixhe and Visé; remaining on the left bank of the Meuse. The firing I heard coming from the right bank, from Visé, was not due to war weapons. (I know enough about firearms to be sure of it.) We were separated from Visé only by the breadth of the river; nothing led us to suppose that there was a fight going on between the Germans and the inhabitants. When the Germans arrived in front of the Meuse, they installed themselves in some houses and fired on us from there.

"I was at the skirmish of Linsmeau. My men shot down a cavalry officer (Hussar regiment). The Germans saw that he had been killed by regulars. I did not hear a single shot coming from the inhabitants of Linsmeau." (Signed) CHAUDOIR.

The Rev. Mr. Meeus, Dean of Aerschot:

"I did not hear about the death of a German officer of high rank at Aerschot. The Germans, at first, behaved properly in the town. Later on they gave out that the son of the Burgomaster had fired on them. It does not seem to me possible, knowing the boy.

"During the battle, the previous days, some Belgian soldiers had fired from the tower of my church; that is why the Germans wanted to punish me. They say it is not allowed to shoot from a church. Thursday morning a nun of the convent came to tell me to hide myself. I hid myself in the cistern of a newly built house and stayed there from Thursday to Saturday. On Monday, when I left Aerschot, I saw that all the town had been sacked." (Signed) MEEUS.

Annex to the Minutes of Session of August 28, 1914.

RETHY, 26th August, 1914.

"MR. PRESIDENT:

"On Saturday, the 22d of August, 1914, about 5.30 P. M., 17 Uhlans came from the direction of Easterlé to the Grand' Place of Rethy, and proceeded on their way to Moll. Following them at a distance of about 500 meters were two other German cavalrymen. These two were at a distance of 100 meters from the Grand' Place in the streets of Moll when five Belgian gendarmes came from a side street and commenced to fire on the two German soldiers. Both Germans were wounded. The first troop of 17 Uhlans came back at full speed upon hearing the firing. Then the five Belgian gendarmes left the Grand' Place. The German cavalry who had come back to the Grand' Place proceeded on foot through the streets firing all the while into the windows of the houses, aiming especially at the houses on the way to Moll. In this way a young girl, Elisa Van Herck, 15 years of age, was killed by a bullet which had been shot from the gun of a German soldier. The Uhlans then entered the Hotel "De Keyzer" and the houses of Victor Melis and of Eugen Scharkon, and destroyed the furniture in these three buildings. At the order of their commander, they set fire to all the buildings on the Grand' Place. Terrified, the inhabitants of the village fled in all directions. In the confusion, a priest, Rev. Father Van Ganswinckel, aged 70 years, was taken hatless out of his rectory, was held at the muzzle of a German soldier's gun, and was directed to go in search of a physician who might give aid to the German soldiers who had been wounded. Then the Burgomaster, the pastor, his curate and the Rev. Van Genechten, as well as the Rev. Van Gansewinkel and the sacristan of the church, were taken into custody by the German soldiers, who maltreated the sacristan to such an extent, that had it not been for the

intervention of the vicar, the sacristan would have been killed. Then, notwithstanding the repeated protests of the Burgomaster and the Rev. vicar saying that it was the gendarmes of the regular Belgian army who had fired upon the Uhlans and not the private citizens of the town, the Germans forced all the party to accompany them on their march. When it became apparent that the Rev. Father Van Gansewinkel was so old and weak that he could not possibly walk with the others, the Germans allowed him to return to his house. The others, however, were obliged to continue with the soldiers beyond the village of Desschel. All the while they were being threatened that, should the German soldiers be attacked, they (the citizens) would immediately be shot down. However, after proceeding some distance further, the German commander liberated them, not doing so until he had given the threat that should the wounded soldier be not sent back to Moll during the evening, the German troops would return to Rethy. The burning of Rethy had been planned by the Germans in such a way that the whole village would have been reduced to ashes had it not been for the timely work of the inhabitants of Rethy, who succeeded in partly stopping the spread of the conflagration. Even with this intervention, the fire had spread to such an extent that several houses had been completely destroyed. They are as follows: The house belonging to Mr. Van Gansenwinkel; house of Leopold Weyts; the house of the widow Sleddens; the house of Victor Raeynaekers; the house of the Slegers family; the granary, the stable and the barn of Mr. J. De Witte; the granary and the stable of the Hotel de Keyser. Besides this, much damage was caused by the fire to the building and to the furniture in the house occupied by Miss Sountjons and belonging to Mr. John Van Gansewinkel. Fortunately the fire was extinguished before the house was completely destroyed.

"We beg you to accept, Mr. President, the expression of our highest consideration."

The Burgomaster,
(Signed) VAN GANSEWINKEL.

The Secretary,
(Signed) WILLEKONS.

Notes taken by M. Cerfout, Manager of the road building service, sent to the Commission by the Minister of Public Works :

"I showed in a previous report how the Germans, in despite of international law, compelled the inhabitants of Visé, the day of their arrival, to pull down the barricades and to fill up the trenches. I also showed how the Burgomaster, Mr. Meurice, a University professor, having protested, was himself compelled to work.

"The same week, Germans passing at Dalhem tried to compel the burgomaster, Mr. Francotte, brother of the late Minister, to supply certain things which had been requisitioned. He refused, feeling sure of his right. He was made prisoner and the rumor spread that he had been killed.

"Mr. Flechet, formerly Deputy, Burgomaster of Varsage, had the same fate; he was made prisoner, as I learned at Maastricht, the 18th of August. I heard that he had been able to get there.

"On about the 7th of August, the Germans fearing vengeance from the inhabitants of Visé, took as hostages the burgomaster, Mr. Meurice, the dean Mr. Lemmens, two sisters of Notre Dame and three sisters of St. Hadelin School. (These details were given to me by the Rev. Mr. Goffin, director of the school, whom I saw the last time I was able to get to Visé.)

"Nobody knows what became of the hostages after the destruction of Visé by fire, the 16th of August. But I must first speak of what occurred on the 4th, the day of the first engagement.

"Eleven civilians were killed. The bodies of the two

Broutsa's were thrown on the pavement, their faces uncovered; an officer of high rank and several young ones stood behind; the soldiers compelled the people to look on while a young officer said in French: 'Ce sort vous sera réservé si vous êtes encore hostiles.' (This will be your fate if you remain hostile.)

"Anyway, twelve days afterwards the Germans burned Visé (after expelling the women and children) and shot down all the men, who had not had the chance to escape.

"There is no mistake to be made about the fire of the 16th. It was not an accident. The last three days I was at Visé, I could hear, hour after hour, the sound of explosions; immediately after a new blaze would appear. Fires and looting were not the work of the worst part of the soldiers. It was all done by order, under the supervision of officers. Dutch Red Cross workers told me at Maestricht that all along the road from Bermeau to Monland they had seen in the ditches heaps of bodies of dead villagers. The smell all round was terrible.

"At Devant-le-Pont, the Germans only passed by, so we had simply to suffer from their requisitions and from their arrogance. I saw an officer enter a public house on horseback and ride round the billiard table.

"I am sorry to say that a German living in the village had terrified some timid inhabitants by reminding them of the Visé atrocities, so that they received the enemy with friendliness and permitted these disgraceful words to be written on their doors in German: 'This house must be preserved. We are friends of the Germans.' "

"Last week, as I was speaking indignantly of those proceedings, before several gentlemen, I was insulted by Mr. ————, a German business man, and was only preserved from injury by my ambulance.

"We were generally not frightened by the troops marching past in columns, but we dreaded the soldiers going about in small patrols, who went drinking, looting and insulting everybody.

"It is impossible to condemn the energetic man who kills or wounds one of those rascals while he is insulting our wives or our daughters. It is for local incidents of the kind that the German officers order all the villages to be burned. I do not know why, but on the 18th of August, old Colson, a farmer at Hallembaye, wounded a German horse. Anyway, nothing can excuse what the Germans did then. Old Mr. Colson, his son and his daughter-in-law were shut up in the farm house and burned. The brutes destroyed all the village. I was told those details by an inhabitant who had fled to Maestricht.

"When I went to the camp with some Antwerp soldiers who had been taken prisoners, I saw a most horrible sight. Five wretched civilians, badly cut all over, their hands tied, were brutally dragged before some officers. A poor little cowkeeper, of 13 or 14 years of age, had a bayonet stab in the cheek and both his arms were bleeding.

"It was cruel to think that, having to bring my wounded to Maestricht, I could not try to defend those victims. It was even imprudent of me to show my pity for them. Several young officers began to say that the Belgians put out the eyes of the wounded and cut off their ears. I protested against such an allegation. A Major stopped me, saying it was our priests who preached resistance and revolt.

"The hour I passed in the camp was enough to decide me to leave this scene of horrors.

"I will not repeat the details given by the Maestricht refugees; just a single one.

"Mrs. Poswick, wife of the Burgomaster of Cannes, was shot down the 18th August because she did not open her door quick enough. The same day, Mr. Dirix, Provincial Councillor of Limburg, was killed with a bayonet.

"At Maestricht, a well known doctor assured me that a girl of 15 and her mother were nearly dying at the

hospital, after having been grossly ill-treated by soldiers.

"At Breda I met the Postmaster of Tongres and a teacher of the royal school. They had been chased out of Tongres, hands up, with many others, on the 18th August, while the women and children were sent in another direction. Why?

"Everything was burning on the road to Maestricht. I will finish my evidence with a most consoling reflection. The Dutch, of whom some of us had doubted at first, behaved splendidly, being full of self-sacrifice and of mercy. At Maestricht alone, there was on the 18th of August, 6,200 Belgian refugees, who relied on the Municipal funds, supported by State help, for their food.

"I traveled from Maestricht to Boxtel with Mr. Delhy, a Belgian engineer residing at Amsterdam. He had brought to the refugees a gift of 4,000 florins given by the Charity Society of that city. I heard that in Dutch Limburg there were more than 25,000 Belgian refugees.

"Some refugees who arrived at Antwerp viâ Boxtel and Breda received free railway tickets marked 'Goed voor een vluchteling.' "

(Signed) F. Cerfout,
Manager Road Building Dept.

Antwerp, 22nd August, 1914.

MEETING OF AUGUST 28TH. AFTERNOON SESSION.

Present: M. Cooreman, President; Count Goblet d'Alviella von Cutsem, Strauss, members. Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, Secretaries; Zech, Assistant Secretary.

Antoine Peemans, brigadier of the transport corps, age 28, born at Skaerbeek, living in France.

"I was attacked, a little before arriving at the Douaifort, by a few German cavalrymen. I had in charge a

Red Cross van. The Germans fired on me while I was picking up the wounded, although I was bearing the Red Cross insignia." (Signed) PEEMANS.

Adele Vansteenwinkel, 55 years old, living in Hofstade:

"I saw a woman dead on the high road. She was about 50 years old. She was called Lisa. A bayonet had been thrust through her body."

(Signed) ADELE VANSTEENWINKEL.

Chevalier Edouard de Selliers de Moranville, lieutenant in the Second Regiment of Guides, age 32, Brussels.

"I was taken prisoner of war by the Germans on the 18th August. At Haelen I was taken to an ambulance placed under the supervision of Dr. Thorne, of Haelen. During my stay there, viz.: 24 hours, I saw that the Germans had broken down the doors of all the abandoned houses; they looted them and put all the booty on military carts. The sentries on duty had their hands full; they then set on fire all the houses they did not require.

"Twenty four hours later I was taken over to Herck-la-Ville to the convent of the Ursuline Sisters which had been converted into a hospital. From there I was able to see fires burning at Donck, a neighboring village, abandoned several days before by our troops. From my window I saw a group of 150 to 200 civilians, with two or three of our infantrymen, marching up the road from Herck-la-Ville to Hasselt, under the guard of German soldiers, armed with muskets and bayonets. The men were tired out. The curate of Herck-la-Ville was able to speak to one of them. He was told that they were compelled to go to Germany for the harvest. It seems that most of them were coming from the neighborhood of Aerschot and of Louvain. I escaped a few days afterward."

(Signed) LT. ED. DE SELLIERS.

Van Leemputte, Francis, Teacher at Saventhem:

"There was a fight on Wednesday, 19th, at Wechter, about 50 houses were set on fire; the Germans killed six persons who were trying to get away. Three Belgian soldiers, disarmed but in uniform, were found in a cellar with a woman and a child. The Germans let the woman and the child go free and killed the soldiers.

"Yesterday, Thursday, 27th August, the Germans began to burn all the villages; on Wednesday evening they had taken six or seven persons as prisoners. I do not know what became of them.

"A woman who was minding her cattle was ordered off her farm and the building was burned.

"On Friday, 21st, at Wechter, a girl of 21, Julie de P——, suffered violence on the part of two soldiers; they ill-treated her in a house from which the proprietor had been expelled. The fact is certain. The girl is very ill; Dr. Adrinens visited her and verified it. The empty houses were all sacked; the Germans took what they wanted in the others, giving worthless paper in payment."

(Signed) Franz van Leemputte.

Mr. Joseph de Becker confirms the witness' testimony and adds:

"My cousin Aloysius de Becker has told me that 25 Belgian men were taken into custody by the Germans. Of these 5 were shot down and killed. The remaining 20 were bound and tied to the cannons of the Germans, and remained thus bound for several days in this position without food, and preceded the Germans on their march south."

(Signed) Jos. de Becker.

Julien van Soidsenhoven, contractor, of Kessel Loo:

"Tuesday evening the Germans began to set fire to the town of Louvain and to the surrounding villages.

Wednesday morning I fled with my wife, but the Germans overtook us on the road. All the women were sent in the direction of the highway leading to Tirlemont. The soldiers killed a young man who was with us; we were all bound with ropes and had to march in front of them. We were about 150; we had to remain with the German army till yesterday morning, 10 o'clock, without receiving any food or drink.

"On Wednesday, 19th August, a band of Germans arrested 4 men and 3 women of my family, one of whom was visibly in the family way. Her husband joined the army. They were all taken to Blawput and imprisoned in a house. The young woman was dragged alone into another empty house and during two hours she suffered ill-treatment on the part of 5 soldiers. When she came back her father and one of the others had to carry her home in the most frightful condition.

"On Thursday, 20th August, a dozen soldiers arrested at their home Mr. and Mrs. L—— and their daughter, aged 16, my own niece. They took them to the country house of Mr. Frantzen, which is quite near. The girl was obliged to drink while the parents were compelled to stand still, a musket being turned in their direction.

"The girl was thrown on a meadow and 5 or 10 soldiers raped her. As she was struggling violently they stabbed her five times with a bayonet. She was left in a dying condition, and the parish vicar who gave her the last sacrament believed she would not live. She had been brought home the day of the outrage and the next day the priest whom the parents had called had her sent to the hospital at Louvain.

"On the Louvain road I saw a number of burning houses. They had been set on fire while the inhabitants were inside and I saw more than 20 charred bodies of people who had not had time to get out."

(Signed) J. VAN SOIDSENHOVEN.

Mr. Auguste Dubois, Lawyer, Louvain:

"The 19th of August, at 3 o'clock, the first German troops entered Louvain. All was quiet till Monday. On that evening (in the morning the Germans had broken into the banks) the Burgomaster, Mr. Colins, was nearly dragged to the station by some soldiers. He had been, I believe, taken as a hostage on Friday, 21st, with Messrs. Schmidt and Vanderkelen, and only released several days later. An officer claimed that holes had been made in some houses on the station street so as to fire on the German troops. Revolver in hand he threatened Mr. Colins and declared he would destroy the city if a single shot was directed against them. The Germans demanded then a hot meal for 250 soldiers just arriving. At the request of Mr. Colins some inhabitants gave up provisions; a little later the Germans required 80 mattresses for the same men.

"Hearing of what was going on, Mr. Schmidt, an alderman, interceded with the German commander who had the burgomaster released. On Tuesday, the 24th, promise had been given to take no more hostages, but in the morning they took two more: Monsignor Coenraets (Vice-Rector of the University) and Juge Maes.

"In the afternoon of the 25th we felt the garrison was getting nervous. The sound of cannon was heard and the battle seemed to draw near the town.

"A little later the army baggage of some German troops arrived in the greatest disorder, and soon after, a heavy fusillade was heard in the streets.

"I believe that the garrison was mistaken and fired at the Germans in retreat. In a few minutes the fusillade increased, cannons were heard, fires broke out in all parts of the town; the shooting continued, the Germans broke the doors open to set fire to the houses.

"On Wednesday morning, the work of devastation was done. An immense blaze of fire extended over Boulevard de Diest, rue de Diest, Boulevard du Tirlemont, Place de la Station. The artillery bombarded the houses to hasten

their ruin. I had fled with my family to a part of the Boulevard de Diest, as yet spared by the flames. A patrol ordered us to go to the station, the only safe place, as all the rest of the city was going to be bombarded. We did this. In the square I saw about 15 dead bodies. I was then arrested and separated from my family. I heard that the women and children would be sent to Germany (Aix-la-Chapelle) by a train leaving the next morning. The men are kept as hostages, at the first shot coming from an inhabitant we shall all be killed.

"We march to Herent, placed with the first rank of the Germans, we receive our baptism of fire in a slight encounter with our infantry. We go then to Bueken, by the road from Malines to Herent. All along everything is sacked; the houses are burning in such a manner that we must run to get out of the smoke and heat.

"At Bueken, a battalion of the 90th Landwehr is formed in a square. The prisoners are put in the center in one line, their hands tied behind their backs. I am told I am going to be shot. I ask permission to write a word of farewell to my wife. The request is granted. I write a card and give it to the lieutenant who promises to send it. We are compelled to sit down, and a picket advances on us. We all believe our last minute is come. No; after ten minutes we are brought back to the marching soldiers, and with our hands still bound, directed to Campenhout where we arrive at eight in the evening. We had to pass through an immense number of troops; we were terribly ill-treated, receiving blows of whips and of lances. The officer in charge of us, whom I must thank for his courtesy, had often to intervene for our protection.

"We passed an awful night in the church; at 4.30 in the morning we were told that those who wished to go to confession had to hasten to do so, all of us being condemned to death. At five o'clock we were told that we should be released, but we had to go back to Louvain.

"At Bueken we joined a number of people from the

neighboring villages and were all sent back to Campenhout. At the village lock, we were pushed on to the German outposts and ordered to march off in a band to Malines, under pain of immediate death.

"We arrived there at 11.30 A. M.; I was sent to Antwerp.

"All the country, as far as the German outposts, is devastated; the houses are burned, the cattle stolen, many inhabitants killed. We saw along the road their unburied bodies. Soldiers are chasing and beating the cattle.

"Officers told us that the bombarding of Louvain was continuing. I certainly heard all day Wednesday artillery roaring in that direction."

(Signed) AUGUST DUBOIS, Lawyer,
28 Boulvd. de Diest,
Louvain.

M. van Aerschot confirms this testimonial and adds:

"At about half-past eight, as everything was burning, Baron Orban de Xivry was asked to go back to his own house. A German officer had promised it would be respected as a Red Cross Hospital. But countermand was given, all the town having to be burned and bombarded. We then fled with Baron Orban, but I was not allowed to stay with him. He must have been made prisoner at the station."

(Signed) VAN AERSCHOT.

Peter Bols, butter dealer, born in 1873, of Aerschot:

"I was present at the death of the Burgomaster of Aerschot. He and also his brother and his son were bound and lying on some straw.

"An officer of high rank approached the Burgomaster and accused him of being responsible for all that was happening. Mr. Tieleman protested, taking his fellow citizens as witnesses of his perfect innocence. Some of

them confirmed his words and referred to his different proclamations. The officer seemed impressed by the evidence, but another officer interfered and said that all the prisoners had to be killed. He had the Burgomaster as well as his brother and his son immediately executed. You know the rest."

(Signed) P. Bols.

The Secretary,
Antoine P. Ernst,
Orts,
Henri Zech.

For the President,
(Signed) Goblet d'Alviella.

MEETING OF THE 29TH OF AUGUST, 1914

Present: Messrs. Cooreman, President; Count Goblet d'Alviella, Ryckmanns, Strauss, Van Cutsem, members; Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck and Orts, Secretaries; Zech, Assistant Secretary.

Session begins at 9 o'clock.

The committee has added to the official report of the meeting an extract from a letter addressed on the 28th of August, 1914, to one of the secretaries of the Committee, the Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck, by his brother,

Mr. Vincent Ernst de Bunswyck, Belgian Consul at Endebbe (Uganda), a volunteer in the Belgian Army.

"After the battle which took place as far as Wechter and in which I participated, the regiment returned to Haecht. Nothing but devastation is to be found wherever the Germans have passed. The few inhabitants who remained behind tell us of the horrors committed by the enemy. At Wachterzeel, seven Germans consecutively violated one woman and killed her afterward. At the same place, they stripped a boy to the waist, threatened to kill him; held a revolver to his chest and pricked him

with lances; they afterward chased him into a field and shot at him without reaching their aim. It seems that some children were drowned. At Wechter, I saw the body of a boy of about 12 years of age in the water under the bridge. I don't know how it got there; whether by accident or whether a murder had been committed by the Germans. Wherever they pass, they turn churches into quarters for their soldiers."

Conrad Bernard, commercial traveler at Hérent:

"On Tuesday, August 25th, I heard a shot fired at Hérent, and then soon afterward a fusillade took place and there were machine-gun shots. It is probable that the shot was fired by a German. On Wednesday, August 26th, a German Captain forced all the inhabitants of Hérent to leave their houses and drove them to the Town Hall. They forced me to bring up all the arms which had been deposited in the cellars of the Town Hall behind cases. All these arms were loaded on a cart. At the station myself and another person were detained and bound with ropes. Stones were thrown at us as we passed among the soldiers. The soldiers wanted to take me for the mayor of Hérent and wanted to shoot me. Having given a written declaration that I was not the mayor, I was set free. I then found the whole village ablaze and a woman told me that, as everybody had left their houses, they were set on fire."

After reading the above the witness confirms it and signs. (Signed) BERNARD.

Alphonse Brusseleers, peasant, of Aerschot:

"I was taken prisoner on Tuesday and had to go along with the Germans. I could not understand them, and together with two others, had to show them the way. I then managed to run away."

(Signed) ALFONS BRUSSELAERS.

Frans VanderAuwera, 29 years old, laborer, of Tamines, near Charleroi:

"The Germans came and chased us out of the house on 22nd. We (the men) were chased into the Church and then led four by four to the Square, where they shot at us. I let myself fall, and only about 80 remained out of the four hundred there. Everything is pillaged and burnt. The civilians of Tamines had done no wrong."

(Signed) FRANS VAN DER AUWERA.

Gustave De Potter, 28 years old, a miner of Tamines:

"The Germans came to Tamines on Friday, August 21st, toward 4 o'clock. We were not allowed to take along anything; they set fire to everything.

"When we had taken to flight, they still killed the fugitives. They set houses on fire with some kind of rocket, which blazes up at once. The soldiers carry them along with them.

"I saw a child of 7 years, who was looking for his father, killed, as well as a woman of 56, who wanted to return home." (Signed) GUSTAVE DE POTTER.

The above declaration is confirmed by Joseph Van Loo, laborer, of Tamines.

(Signed) JOSEPH VAN LOO.

Louis Vissenaecken, 57 years old, dealer at Aerschot:

"On Tuesday, August 18th, Belgians had been here and on Wednesday the Germans came. They took us along with them and all the men were led to a field. We had to empty our pockets, and had to push on some 200 meters toward the Demer. The mayor again strongly warned us to be very careful. Twenty-five Germans came to my house, and shot through the windows and into the houses. They pillaged my house and killed six head of cattle, but did not pay for them."

(Signed) B. VISSENAECKEN.

The above testimony is confirmed by his son Oscar.

De Bie, Comptroller of State Railways, 58 years old, living at No. 9 Béguinage, Aerschot, testifies:

"The battle started on Wednesday morning, after which all became quiet again. Toward 7.30 P. M. the shooting started once more. The Germans claimed that the Belgians had shot from the church tower with a machine gun; I know nothing about this. The Germans then attacked our doors with hatchets. We came out and together with all our neighbors we were made prisoners.

"When a certain number of us were together, we were led to the courtyard of a convent, where many women were already assembled. From there we were led out of town to a spot, where the mayor, my brothers and my sons, as well as several civil and military Belgians, were herded together; our hands were tied together and we passed the night in this way.

"Next morning we were placed in rows, and a superior officer ordered one man out of three shot. I did not witness the shooting of my fellow citizens, but it is well known that they were put to death. We were then set free and we thought that all was over, but this was not the case. Our troubles started again and we were once more arrested and shut up in a barn, and at last we were sent into the field to bury those who had been shot in the course of the morning. Then the civil population was obliged to dig holes and trenches. We were afterward taken further away near the wounded and captured Belgian soldiers. A German cavalryman dashed up like a maniac and before our very eyes wounded a Belgian prisoner with his lance. In the evening we were counted and they threatened that if one of us were missing next day, that there would be more reprisals. Thus Thursday drew to a close.

"We were no longer troubled on Friday morning. In the evening, men, women and children were assembled before the church. Nine of us, including my son and myself, were allowed to leave, thanks to the intervention

of an officer who had lodged with one of our neighbors. I left Aerschot with a German pass (safe-conduct). Up to the time we left, Saturday, I did not know of any deeds of violence perpetrated on women."

(Signed) De Bie.

Mr. Gielen, Assistant King's Attorney in Antwerp, was not an eye-witness of what occurred at Bilsen; but his brother and sister-in-law left Bilsen on the 17th. According to their declaration the Germans behaved quite well at first. On Sunday, August 16th, they took as hostages Messrs. Gielen, Deputy; Hauben, Mayor, and Justice of the Peace Claes; Dr. Thoms and Mr. Verjams, Provincial Councillor, who were released the next day when the Germans left the town.

On Sunday evening, August 16th, four inhabitants, Mr. Simon Daenen among them, were shot without the slightest provocation. It seems that these atrocities, committed in every place, are usually the result of drunkenness on the part of soldiers, who empty the cellars of private residences.

Mr. Pierre Mertens, lawyer, living Rue Louise, passed some time in Maestricht lately. There he heard from Mr. Poswick that Mrs. Poswick, together with Mr. Dierckx, permanent deputy, had been shot at Canne.

The committee may hear him.

After reading, he confirms and signs his testimony.

(Signed) L. Gielen.

Mr. Gaston Barbanson, aged 38, living at Brussels, Rue Defacz, volunteer Brigadier in the 1st Regiment of Guides, testifies:

"I belong to the staff of the 6th Army Division. On the day of the battle of Malines, on Monday the 24th, I was in Malines.

"On the 24th of August, the Germans were chased from Hofstade and Sempst by Belgian troops. In the evening I went with Count Fauconnier to Sempst, where we remained for an hour and a half, or two. Chevalier Vandermeulen and I questioned the civilians, and were informed—among other things—of the following:

"A workman in the employ of a bicycle-maker had been undeservedly stabbed with bayonets, and then, while still living, thrown into his house. The Germans saturated him with paraffin and set fire to his house. We saw the workman's charred body.

"We were also told that an old man and his son had been killed by saber thrusts. The old man's head was almost cut off. A woman whom they tried to force to remain indoors, but who wanted to get out, was immediately fired at, and shot in the leg. A cyclist who passed some Germans was shot. According to the declaration of several people, it appears that, when leaving, the Germans took about 50 persons with them. A woman stated that her husband and three brothers had been taken along in this way in the course of the morning, and that she does not know what became of them.

"A series of other things not quite so reliable were related to us."

After reading the above testimony, the witness confirms it and signs. (Signed) G. BARBANSON.

The above is confirmed by Mr. Vander Meulen, of the Cavalry, who signs.

(Signed) VANDER MEULEN.

Colonel Van Bever, of Antwerp, reports that his son, **Commanding Officer Van Bever,** related the following facts:

"On August 26th, 1914, Commanding Officer Van Bever, commanding the 2nd Company of the 2nd Regiment of division Artillery, occupied a fighting position in

the neighborhood of Haecht. The battle became very deadly and at one time it was noticed that—contrary to the rules of warfare—German soldiers hid themselves behind a house near the station and from there fired upon our soldiers. As soon as the commanding officer became aware of this, he directed his fire upon the house which was completely demolished. The bodies of German soldiers wearing their uniforms were dragged out of the ruins.

"On the 26th of August, a building near Wespelaer was seen bearing the flag of the Geneva International Convention.

"The commanding officer had misgivings about the ensign, and sent an officer to reconnoiter, who ascertained that beside the flag were German soldiers with a machine gun.

"Useless to say that the building met with the same treatment as the house near the Haecht station."

(Signed) G. Van Bever.

Mr. Edward Lemmens, Barrister at the Court of Appeals, at Brussels:

"I was driving a motor car which was to go to Holland with the mail of the Dutch Legation. Upon crossing Aerschot on Monday evening, we saw that the town was a heap of ruins.

"At Hersselt, the priest explained to us that they had started by pillaging all the cellars; this explains the state of drunkenness of several German soldiers whom we met. A priest of Hersselt had been taken as hostage; he told me that the Germans, wherever they went, claimed that the civilians had fired. The affirmation of a single soldier is sufficient to lead to reprisals. It is certain that not one shot was fired at Hersselt; nevertheless many men were shot dead. At Sitaert, near Moerhout, the Germans found bows and arrows in a public house where an archery was practiced. They claimed that the arrows were poisoned and had been intended for them. They forced people to sign a declaration to that effect, a declaration written in

German, after which they shot both the proprietor and his son."

After reading the above, he confirms and signs his declaration. (Signed) Ed. Lemmens.

Joseph Collin, aged 53, barkeeper at Wespelaer:

"On Friday, August 21st, 1914, the Germans ransacked the house from top to bottom, including the cellar with all its contents, including the safe which they smashed, afterward setting fire to the house. They burned a great many houses in Haecht and Wespelaer."

After reading the above declaration, he confirms and signs it.

(Signed) J. Collin.

Joséphine Reyaerts, aged 26, of Campenhout:

"I lodged German soldiers for two days; I fed them and was then locked up in the cellar with my family. Afterward we were all led to Buecken. The priest of Buecken asked to be allowed to accompany us. The Germans refused and fired at him. I saw him fall. A German said that one shot was not enough for a Belgian, that nose, ears and limbs ought to be cut off. I saw two Belgian soldiers whom they had made prisoners being ill-treated. They derided them and compelled them to go through a great many exercises; made them carry loads, and beat them in such a manner that they were barely able to crawl along. An officer told us that the reason for their being so hard on Belgians was that a German officer's fingers had been cut off by Belgians, who wished to get his ring.

"The Germans burned a house and all the cattle. I buried a civilian whom the Germans killed."

After reading, the witness confirms and signs her declaration.

(Signed) Joséphine Reyaerts.

Mr. Beruck, Maritime Agent at Kessel:

"My sister, Mrs. David, lives in Visé. A first fire broke out on the day of the attack. Up to the 15th, Mrs. David had lodged 10 Germans in her house. On the 15th, at 11 P. M., all of them were drunk. They fired a shot, and others began immediately to rush into the houses. My sister was dragged by the hair through the garret. There was an air-hole in the cellar. They claimed that the shot had been fired through there. The Germans who had lodged there said, '*Nein, gute Leute.*' ('No, good people.') The women were locked in the cellar of St. Hadelin College; the remainder of Visé was burnt. The men were sent to Germany, as prisoners of war. The women were then chased out of the town without being allowed to dress themselves. Mrs. David lives in Lierre with her parents."

(Signed) Fernand Beruck.

The British Consul at Antwerp sends the following declaration, transmitted to him by his son. This the committee has decided to annex to its official report.

British Consulate General for Belgium,

Antwerp, August 24th, 1914.

"In a small village which has been entirely destroyed by fire, situated between the railway viaduct of Antwerp and Elewyt, I witnessed the following sight during the last attack which was made on the 26th of August, 1914. In a small farm an old man was attached by the arms to the rafter of the roof of his house. The body was quite charred. Only the head, arms and feet were intact. Further on, a second case: A little boy, of about 15 years of age, had his hands tied behind his back, and the body was riddled with stabs of German bayonets. These are atrocious cases. Several dead bodies were found, as if they

had been killed while begging pardon, the arms uplifted and the hands joined.

"It is true, so help me God."

(Signed) ANDREW COURTOIS,
2nd Grenadiers of Brussels.

Written and signed on oath in my presence.

(Signed) EDWARD A. HERTSLET,

(Son of Sir Cecil Hertslet, British Consul General, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury.)

This report signed by The President:
COOREMAN.
The Secretaries:
ORTS,
ERNST DE BUNSWYCK.

MEETING OF 29TH AUGUST.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Present: Messrs. Cooreman, President; Strauss, Van Cutsem, Count Goblet d'Alviella, Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck, Orts, Secretaries; Zech, Assistant Secretary.

The President takes the chair at 3 o'clock.

Note of Mr. de X..... on the Hersselt Atrocities.

[The name of this gentleman is withheld on account of the fact that his testimony might bring upon him reprisals from the Germans.]

"Hersselt, near Aerschot (Province of Antwerp, district of Westerloo), is again now partially occupied by the German troops. Therefore only a brief inquiry was possible. It proved the following facts:

"On Tuesday, 18th August, in the beginning of the afternoon, Uhlans coming from the direction of Aerschot entered the territory of Hersselt. Their advance guard, of about 50 men, was followed by more considerable

forces preceding an army corps which passed through the center of the village on Wednesday between 2.30 and 10.30 A. M. marching to Aerschot.

"The presence of several officers of high rank in the advance guard, namely, of General von Stamfort, did not prevent the soldiers from looting and murdering. In Hersselt 24 inhabitants were killed, 32 farms and houses, and two mills were burned down. The soldiers who committed those crimes had plundered many liquor shops; several of them were visibly drunk.

"A few minutes after their arrival at Hersselt, the Uhlans began to fire in all directions without any plausible reason. One of them fell; he must certainly have been wounded by his comrades, because all the evidence seemed to prove that no inhabitant used a rifle.

"Men, women and children were then immediately arrested. The burgomaster and his clerk were shut up in the municipal building.

"The women and children were released shortly after; the men, 98 in all, were kept in the chancel of the new church and had to stay there, under most severe penalty, till the next morning.

"A certain number of people, who were running away, were shot down, namely: Leon Wyns, aged 82; Louis van Uytsel, 30; Louis Verbeeck, 45; Joseph van de Velde, 55; Leonard van Uytsel, 65, and his two daughters, the eldest aged 30, the youngest 25; Smolders, 63; Joseph Draulans, 30, and his brother Charles, 24, who had hidden under a shed, were shot point blank before the eyes of their father.

"Constant Branders, Laermans-Corten, and Ed Van Thielen were shot in the village.

"Jean van der Bosch was found charred in his bed. Joseph van Uystel, who had to go and fetch oats for the horses, was shot after having obeyed.

"The Uhlans said to everyone: 'Zie haben geshossen' (you have been shooting).

"The German authorities certainly did not give them-

selves the trouble to make an inquiry on the death of the Uhlan. The case was only a pretext for the atrocities committed in the center of the village, as the Uhlans began firing as soon as they entered our territory. The following deeds were accomplished before the Uhlan's death:

"1. Burning the De Bel farm, belonging to Countesse Jeanne de Merode, and another one near the Averbode Abbey.

"2. Firing on the inhabitants of those farms, who were running away. Emmanuel van den Brande was killed.

"3. Joseph Kennes shot.

"4. Joseph Wauters shot in his house.

"5. In a field near the road, Mrs. van Opstal, who had at her side her three-year-old baby, was killed. It is proved that she was first raped.

"6. Along the road about 30 farms and houses were burned. The damage can be valued at about 400,000 francs (about $80,000).

"7. The village mill was burned. Another one, located in the neighborhood of Hersselt, at Bergomprey, was also burned by Uhlans coming from Westerloo. The miller and his workman were killed.

"Those atrocities were committed with the approval of the military chief. A man saw General von Stamfort pass his hands over his forehead saying: 'What I had to do yesterday shall remain a stain on my life; but my men were shot at.' When somebody remarked that the firing began before the Germans were even in the village, the General got in a passion.

"The same man says that on Saturday, 29th, a band of Uhlans coming from Aerschot surrounded the villages of Ramsel, Houtvenne, Boischot and Westmerbeek. Many people, among them several priests, were arrested. The Germans then entered the private houses, all the able men were pushed out, hands up, and had to march before the Uhlans' horses in the direction of Heyst-op-den-Berg and Aerschot where I heard they would be compelled to dig trenches.

"The Uhlans took with them provisions, horses and carts."

Maurice Coenraets, corporal 30th Infantry, 1st B. 4th C.

"I was wounded in the fight of Cognelée (Namur). The day the Germans entered Namur I was lying at the Bribosia Hospital with some Belgian, French and German wounded. I wanted to get away, but Dr. Bribosia and a German officer told me that we had all better stay and that no harm should be done to us.

"The next day the Germans who had been made prisoners were removed, and a heavy fusillade began to be directed against the hospital. I hid in the cellar. I was able to get out, and, with the help of a nun, I passed through a small door into a neighboring house.

"I saw Belgian wounded being shot down as quickly as they came out of the hospital. A big Red Cross flag was flying on the building. The Germans set the hospital on fire; they then shot the Belgian and French wounded."

(Signed) M. Coenraets.

Joseph Declerck, 45, chief clerk of the District Commissioner of Louvain.

"I was living with my family in the vicinity of Louvain, 95 rue du Chemin de Fer, at Kessel-loo. At first news of the enemy's arrival we went back to town, rue du Chêne. The Germans entered in perfect order.

"The next day, Thursday, I went to my villa which was occupied by officers and soldiers belonging I believe to the flying corps. They behaved very well; we prepared them their meal. On Friday, Lieutenant Pfahler came to rue du Chêne. He wanted a bath.

"Saturday morning the aviators left; my two brothers went to the villa to protect it against looters. Everybody was uneasy, knowing what had happened at Tongres. We feared the passage of the stragglers.

"Nothing special occurred on the 26th.

"I heard then the cannon; the arrival of the French was announced. My brothers went to guard the villa. All the day troops arrived by rail. At about 8 o'clock shots were heard in rue du Chêne and the vicinity. A clamor broke out; the noise lasted about twenty minutes, after that shots were again heard now and again. From the garret I saw fire blazing in the direction of the rue de Savoy; another fire broke out in another quarter; a third one showed itself near the University buildings.

"At daybreak I was able to see that the University building was burning; a student whom I knew then came to tell us it was time to flee, the whole town was to be destroyed. The Germans, I learned, were plundering the shops.

"Wanting a pass, I went to the Town Hall, where the Staff was, and received a pass from some officers. I left my house with my family by the deserted streets. In the Place du Peuple, all was burning. I saw that some fighting had taken place in the rue des Joyeuses Entrées; the front of the houses bore marks of the firing. A German soldier was lying dead and helmets were thrown on the ground. Where I was the houses were intact. I don't know what troops had been engaged. In the Chaussée de Tirlemont, the houses were preserved, but all was on fire above the bridge, at Kessel-loo. We did not dare continue and took the Boulevard de Tirlemont; in the outside parts of this, all the houses—I have one there—were burning one after the other.

"Near the station, the Germans had dug a trench. I think I saw a dead German soldier. At the station, I was separated from the women of my family. Soldiers conducted me via the canal and the Chaussée de Malines to the '1830 Memorial Chapel.' A little further we stopped in a field and received some food.

"Far off, near the Porte de Diest, I thought I heard the report of a fusillade. The soldiers seemed to expect an attack. They told us that we were hostages and that we

should be shot if inhabitants fired on them. Showing us the burning houses, they called our attention to the firing going on; but the reports we heard were only those of the cartridges exploding in the fire.

"At Bueken we were kept in the fields, and set free the next day.

"I affirm I saw the University building burning, the library is there, as we all know; but I could not say if that particular wing was touched or not.

"Soldiers said that the fate of Louvain was due to the fact that civilians had fired on their troops. They are particularly implacable toward the priests; who, they say, preach against them. They also pretend not to recognize the belligerent character of the Civic Guard."

(Signed) J. DECLERCK.

Baron Alphonse de Gruben, 48, Burgomaster of Boisschot.

"On the 19th, I gave order to the Civic Guard of Boisschot to requisition in every house all the arms that could be found, rifles, pistols, etc. I am certain that none were left; the Civic Guard kept theirs, but when the Germans came they put them down, the enemy being in superior force. No guard fired a single shot.

"Three Uhlans were killed the 18th or the 19th by soldiers; five or six days ago a fourth one was shot by a soldier posted behind the mill. A German soldier said to the alderman, Mr. Naets: 'You shall pay for that.' The fact was reported to me by Medard Peeters, of Boisschot, living now with a tinman, rue du Commerce. No violence was done to us before the death of the fourth Uhlan. My coachman, who is at Wyneghem, will be able to give more details." (Signed) BARON DE GRUBEN.

De Coninck, Henri, servant of Baron de Gruben.

"Three Uhlans were killed at Boisschot on the 19th and a fourth one was shot the 26th, near the mill. I heard people say that this one had been killed by a civilian

hidden in the mill and I was told that a German had said to Alderman Naets: 'You shall pay for that.'

"Yesterday, 28th August, I saw many Germans arriving. I hid myself in a ditch near the castle. I saw the Germans searching with their bayonets to see if anybody was hidden in the briars.

"I was behind the castle; people hidden in front told me they saw the Germans opening the shutters. They heard them breaking the furniture inside. They took away with them the three horses which were in the stables.

"I left Boisschot yesterday at 7.30 o'clock. The Germans said they would not molest the women. They arrested the men together with the curate and his vicar, some of them were bound. Those details were given me by people who came with me to Antwerp."

(Signed) De Connick Henri.

General Deruette, Aide de Camp to the King, in command of the 20th Brigade.

"On the 25th of August, we passed to the north of Hofstade. Just as we were picking up our dead, I saw lying on a stretcher the body of a woman stabbed by a bayonet. I also saw the body of a boy who had been killed as he was kneeling down, asking mercy. The corpse had kept that position under the sheet that was over it. The boy was aged 15 or 16. The two bodies were put in a dance hall. The next day, as they were already smelling and as the Burgomaster had been taken as hostage, I sent them to the vicar of Hofstade who identified them and buried them."

(Signed) Deruette.

Dr. Burger, Surgeon of the 2d Regiment of Carbineers.

"I saw two bodies, a woman of 40 or 50, and a boy of 15 or 16, but I was not able to see the wounds. I was told the victims bore bayonet wounds."

(Signed) Burger.

Colonel Biebuyck, in command of the 2nd Carbineers.

"On Wednesday, 26th August, 1914, I was ready for action to the south of Schippelat, a hamlet near Hofstade. I held that position as late as 5 p. m., when I was compelled to retire. The position was occupied by the Germans. From a few hundred meters distance, I saw several fires lit by the Germans, a few farm houses were standing there, and I believe that it was these the enemy destroyed. Fire was systematically set to all. The Germans must have some special appliance for that purpose, because only a few minutes elapsed between our departure and the beginning of the fire.

"I confirm the testimony of General De Ruette that was read to me." (Signed) BIEBUYCK.

"On my right, German columns attacking me bore white flags. My men took no notice of it, considering their attitude and the military situation."

(Signed) BUBRUYCK.

Alberic Rolin, volunteer in the Artillery of the 20th Brigade, 103rd Battery, certifies he saw between Malines and Hofstade, on Tuesday, 25th of August, in the afternoon, the body of a woman of about 40 with a baby of five years pinned to the ground by six bayonets. (Signed) ROLIN.

The Commission joins to its proceedings the declaration of Mr. van Aerschot received by one of the Secretaries, Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck.

The President,
(Signed) COOREMAN.

The Secretaries:
(Signed) ERNST DE BUNSWYCK.
(Signed) ORTS.

The Assistant Secretary,
(Signed) ZECH.

Mr. van Aerschot (Felix), manufacturer, aged 44, living at Louvain in Rue Leopold.

"The Germans made their entry into Louvain on the 18th of August; they immediately requisitioned lodgings and food; they broke open with axes the doors of all the empty houses and looted them completely, committing all kinds of excesses. They then went to the private banks, the National Bank, the Bank de la Dyle, the Popular Bank and took away the cash. They took hostages, namely, Mr. Colins, Burgomaster; Senator van der Helen, and Mr. Schmidt, alderman. These were released two days later, but two others were taken, Mr. de Faudeur, Justice of the Peace, and Mr. Hermans Ansloos, substitute Senator; on the 21st the Dean of Louvain and Mgr. Coenraets, Vice-Rector of the University, were added to them.

"For the rest, all was calm till the afternoon of August 25th, the second day of the battle round Malines. I had in my house a captain and nine soldiers. At 7 o'clock the news came to them that the enemy was near the town; they equipped themselves and got ready to leave. Several were crying, we comforted them, and gave them food and drink.

"Just at 8 o'clock we heard firing in the direction of the Place du Peuple where all the cavalry was assembled. The train, which was in Rue Leopold, turned and left full speed in the direction of the station. I was on the doorstep, and could hear the whistle of the bullets coming from the Place du Peuple. A heavy fusillade began, and cavalry charges took place in the direction of the station, near which the cavalry must have fallen upon the Germans repulsed from Malines by the Belgians.

"From that moment a fearful cannonade began, we heard the noise of the machine guns and could see the shrapnel falling in the center of the town. We went down to the cellar. Fusillade and bombardment ceased at about 10 o'clock; several houses had suffered; the Germans then began to set all Louvain on fire, by throw-

ing shrapnel and grenades in every direction. When the fire seemed to burn slowly the soldiers entered the houses and made it blaze. It lasted all night. On Thursday, 27th, in the morning, I left my house with my wife, my child, my mother, my father-in-law and a cousin, as it was about to be attacked by the flames; my street, Rue Leopold, was already partly destroyed. We arrived at the house of Baron Orban de Xivry in Rue de la Station. He advised us to leave Louvain with him and members of the Red Cross, a German officer having just announced to him that the whole city would be destroyed. We all went out and saw the entire street in a blaze. The Town Hall was then intact, but the University building, containing the library, must have been destroyed in the night. Eye-witnesses told me that the Cathedral of St. Peter had been set on fire. The blaze was so great that, although we were in the middle of the Rue de la Station, we had to run, so as not to be roasted. On leaving the house a German officer separated us into two groups. Baron Orban de Xivry's family and the members of the Red Cross were sent directly to the Station by the Rue de la Station; my family was sent to the same place by the Rue Marie Therese.

"At the Place de la Station all the houses were on fire. One could smell a horrible scent of charred flesh. After some discussion we were grouped together in the Place, where ten or fifteen bodies of dead civilians were lying. The soldiery mocked us; the husbands were separated from their wives and children without being allowed to say farewell. Baron Orban's group was sent to Germany by rail.

"The deserted women were assembled in front of the tram platform. They did not seem to be under guard. The men were dragged in front of some infantry; they were searched, hands up, and several were robbed; we were then sent to the Mount Ceaser at half an hour's distance and to Herent, a neighboring village in the direction of Malines. We remained several hours in the

open country. We heard firing and the bullets whistled past our ears. We were ordered to lie down.

"About 3 P. M., after having received a bit of black bread and some rice, we were sent along the highway leading to Malines, till half way to Campenhout. All the villages along the road were burning; we had sometimes to run so as not to be touched by the flames. At the doors of the houses, charred bodies were lying. A full hour's walk from Campenhout we stopped; the Germans tied our arms behind our backs, saying we were going to be shot. There were 74 of us; we stayed three quarters of an hour in a trench, a company in front and one behind us; but an alarm having been given we had to continue our march toward Campenhout. Along the road we saw only burning farms and cattle tearing about.

"We arrived at about 7 P. M. at Campenhout which was intact; the church was immediately occupied by the Germans and we were shut up inside for the night. Two priests, an American and a Spaniard, were with us and suffered the same ill-treatment. At 4 o'clock in the morning, an officer formally invited those who wanted to go to confession to lose no time in doing so, as our execution was to take place half an hour later. The Spanish and the American priests were still with us.

"At half past four we were told that the prisoners taken at Louvain were free and we received a pass for Louvain. The two priests were not with us at that moment and I don't know what became of them; perhaps they went to the presbytery.

"A few kilometers outside Louvain we met a German brigade. The commander took away our pass and made us prisoners again.

"We were told that we were going to be sent before the forts of Antwerp to taste Belgian fire. We had to march at the head of the Germans, in the direction of Malines; all the way we were insulted, beaten, spit at, threatened with death.

"When we got back to Campenhout, the general who had given us our pass in the morning met us. We asked him to release us; it was done, and we left on condition to remain together as far as the last German outpost, near Malines. Different bands joined us on the way. A woman, who was with one of them, was delivered on the road."

(Signed) Van Aerschot.

The Secretary,
(Signed) Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck.

An honorable gentleman personally known by the members of the Commission of Inquiry declares: (The name is withheld on account of the fact that his testimony might bring upon him reprisals from the Germans.)

"At the request of the Countess de Bethune, who wanted news of her father, of whom she had heard nothing for several days, I went this morning to Louvain via Tervueren, Weert St. George, Heverlé. From Weert St. George, I only saw destroyed villages and terror-stricken peasants lifting their arms in the air in sign of mercy. All the houses had a white flag flying, even those that were burning, and one could see the rag hanging on the ruins.

"At Weert St. George I asked the reason of the German atrocities; the inhabitants said categorically that none of them had shot, all the firearms having been laid down; but the Germans had punished them because a Belgian gendarme had killed a Uhlan.

"The inhabitants remaining at Louvain took refuge in the borough of Heverlé, which is crowded, the people having been chased from the town by the soldiers and the fire.

"The fire began a little beyond the American College, all the city is destroyed, except the Station and the Town Hall. The fire was still burning to-day, and far from stopping it, the Germans seemed to be keeping it

up by throwing straw into the blaze, as I saw them do in a street near the Town Hall. The Cathedral, the theater, the University Library are destroyed; Louvain is like an old ruined city, in which one can see only drunken soldiers, carrying bottles of wine and spirits; the officers themselves are sitting on chairs and drinking like their men. In the streets, swollen bodies of dead horses are growing putrid in the sun and the stench of the fire and of the dead is such that I kept it with me till my motor-car was back at Brussels." (Dated 30th August, 1914.)

APPENDIX

(A) Cables received by the Belgian Minister at Washington

I. (Dated September 8, 1914.)
II. (Dated September 15, 1914.)

(B) Speech delivered by His Excellency Mr. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, in response to the address by **His Excellency Mr. Carton de Wiart, Special Envoy of His Majesty the King of the Belgians,** Chief of the Belgian Delegation, in the presence of Mr. Bryan, Secretary of State, and of Mr. Havenith, Belgian Minister at Washington.

I. Cable of September 8, 1914

You have received the Reports of the Commission, dated August 25th and 31st. Since then a great many localities situated in the Vilvorde-Malines-Louvain triangle, an extremely fertile and densely populated region, have been partially pillaged and completely burnt. The population is dispersed, and a number of inhabitants, among which are women and children, were arrested and shot without trial, and without apparent motive, except the desire to inspire terror. This is especially the case in Sempst, Weerde, Elewys, Hofstade, Wespelaer, Wilsele, Buecken, Eppeghem, Waekerseel, Botselaer, Werchter, Thildonck, Boort-Meerbeek, Houthem, Tremeloo, Tistelt, Gelrode and Herelt. At Wavre, where the inhabitants were unable to pay a levy of three millions, 56 houses were burnt. The largest part of Cortenberg was burnt. To excuse these attacks, the Germans allege that an army of civilians had resisted them. According to trustworthy testimony, no provocation has been proven at Vise, Aerschot, Louvain, Wavre, and in the localities situated in the Malines-Louvain-Vilvorde triangle, to which fire was set, and the inhabitants massacred several days after the German occupation.

(Signed) Minister of Foreign Affairs.

II. Cable of September 15, 1914

Inform the Belgian Mission that the Commission of Inquiry continues to report ruins, devastation and pillage, methodically executed by German troops in localities occupied by them. The city of Termonde was destroyed without any hostile participation on the part of civilians.

Out of 1,400 houses 295 are still standing; others set on fire and razed to the ground by the Germans after their entrance into the city. Several civilians were imprisoned and executed with bayonets in the presence of relatives and fellow-citizens. At Melle, 9 civilians were killed, and 45 properties set on fire without reason. Re-occupation of Aerschot by the Belgian army reveals disastrous deeds. Homes which were not burnt were sacked and pillaged. On September 6th, before the return of Belgian troops, 400 civilians, among whom were 30 clergymen, were locked up, since August 30th, in the church, without food, and carried off and sent to parts unknown. Localities in the neighborhood completely destroyed. Everywhere along the road are corpses of civilians; women and young girls, violated. Systematic pillage.

(Signed) MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

REPLY OF PRESIDENT WILSON

Excellency, Gentlemen:

Permit me to say with what sincere pleasure I receive you as representatives of the King of the Belgians, a people for whom the people of the United States feel so strong a friendship and admiration, a King for whom they entertain so sincere a respect; and to express my hope that we may have many opportunities of earning and deserving their regard. You are not mistaken in believing that the people of this country love justice, seek the true paths of progress, and have a passionate regard for the rights of humanity. It is a matter of profound pride to me that I am permitted for a time to represent such a people and to be their spokesman, and I am honored that your King should have turned to me in time of distress as to one who would wish on behalf of the people he represents to consider the claims to the impartial sympathy of mankind of a nation which deems itself wronged.

I thank you for the document you have put in my hands containing the result of an investigation made by a judicial committee appointed by the Belgian Government to look into the matter of which you have come to speak. It shall have my most attentive perusal and my most thoughtful consideration.

You will, I am sure, not expect me to say more. Presently, I pray God very soon, this war will be over. The day of accounting will then come when I take it for granted the nations of Europe will assemble to determine a settlement. Where wrongs have been committed, their consequences and the relative responsibility involved will be assessed. The nations of the world have fortunately by agreement made a plan for such a reckoning and settlement. What such a plan cannot compass the opinion of

mankind, the final arbiter in all such matters, will supply. It would be unwise, it would be premature, for a single government, however fortunately separated from the present struggle, it would even be inconsistent with the neutral position of any nation which like this has no part in the contest, to form or express a final judgment.

I need not assure you that this conclusion, in which I instinctively feel that you will yourselves concur, is spoken frankly because in warm friendship and as the best means of perfect understanding between us, an understanding based upon mutual respect, admiration, and cordiality. You are most welcome and we are greatly honored that you should have chosen us as the friends before whom you could lay any matter of vital consequence to yourselves in the confidence that your course would be understood and met in the same spirit in which it was conceived and intended.